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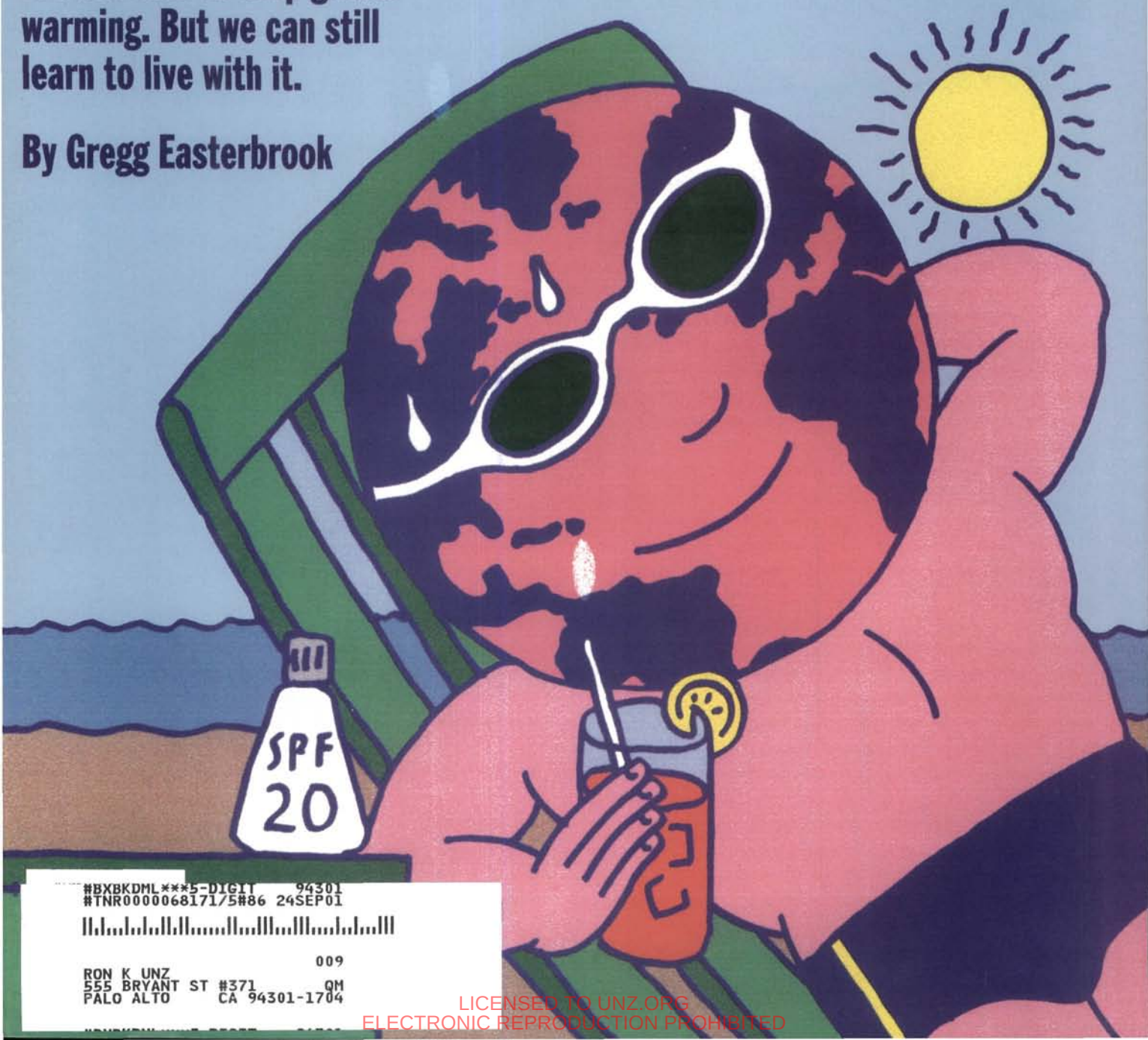
By Gregg Easterbrook



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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

MAY 4, 1998

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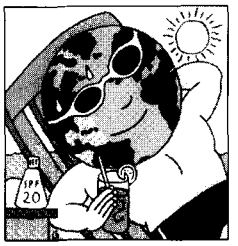

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CORRESPONDENCE

Steady state

To the editors:

Charles Lane is too timid in his support of self-determination for Puerto Rico ("Admit it," March 30). The sole argument in support of denying Puerto Ricans the right to decide their own status is language. As Lane asserts, the island could become "America's first non-English-speaking state."

New Mexico became a state shortly after passage of enabling legislation in 1910; at that time, 63 percent of the population was Spanish-American or Indian. Louisiana became a state in 1812, nine years after its transfer to the United States. It had a majority-French-speaking population and used the Napoleonic Code as its civil law. When Pennsylvania became a state, more than 40 percent of its population was of German ancestry and speech, and they were the dominant group in most settled Pennsylvania counties except Philadelphia.

A visitor to Puerto Rico in 1998 is unlikely to find in its future "another Quebec"—a "distinct society" whose claims will turn the United States into a bilingual country. The larger risk that Puerto Rico faces is that the overwhelming cultural power of the United States—reflected in its Wal-Marts, its Burger Kings, the economic opportunity from using English in tourism, pharmaceuticals, government, and jobs on the mainland, the migration and return on flights to Miami, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago—will make Puerto Rico North American in ways that the citizens do not want. That is a decision they should be allowed to make.

JIM SHEEHAN
Ardmore, Pennsylvania

To the editors:

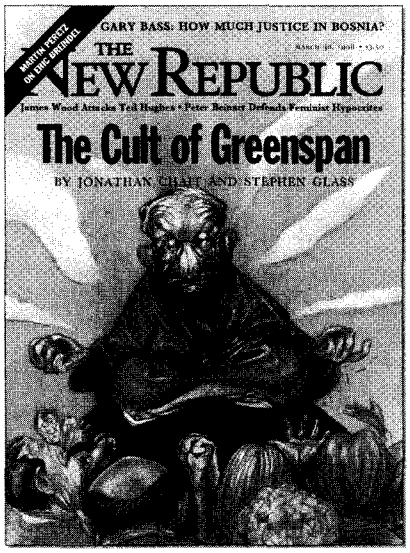
Regarding Charles Lane's discussion of statehood for Puerto Rico, it is worth noting that the effect on the House of Representatives will be less severe than on the Senate. Since 1913 the number of congressmen has been fixed at 435. Whenever a new state has been admitted, therefore, it generally has not diminished the power or influence of any current member of the House; it simply increases the number of constituents they represent. In the Senate, however, the impact is significant, because it will necessarily have to increase its number to 102. This is the real obstacle to Puerto Rico statehood because Puerto Rico, presumed to be Democrat-leaning, will never become a state under a Republican-controlled Congress.

BRUCE BARTLETT
Washington, D.C.

Hypocritique

To the editors:

In "Hypocritics" (March 30), Peter Beinart misstates my whole premise. I do not attack the feminist definition of sexual harassment; I merely dissect it. Conservatives are not so much adopting these definitions as tracing their origins, and they are enjoying the chaos. Clinton is properly vulnerable to this kind of exposure, as he campaigned as a conspicuous political feminist, exploited the Anita Hill furor, and profited from it. It is



only fair now that he be held to the standards to which others were held by his friends.

Otherwise, I am delighted to have served as a peg for one of your writers, as I have, in two or three pieces, quoted extensively from the excellent article by Margaret Talbot in your February 16 issue. Turnabout is certainly fair play.

NOEMIE EMERY
Alexandria, Virginia

To the editors:

Peter Beinart seems to think that, because they have objected to feminism's "eroding the distinction between consensual and non-consensual sex," conservatives are logically bound to concede that the president's alleged conduct vis-à-vis Monica Lewinsky was morally correct because it was, after all, consensual. But this is ludicrous. Conservatives never claimed that any sexual relationship consented to by all parties is always morally okay; otherwise, they would have had no moral problem per se with polygamy, incest, homosexual sex, prostitution, etc.

What conservatives have objected to in feminism is its tendency to suspect (if not reject outright) the very notion of "freely given consent" between men and women because (they say) society gives such unequal power to men that even the most routine kinds of sexual relations between men and women are prima facie cases of rape, the woman's consent notwithstanding. But one can reject such sweeping claims and still maintain that mutual consent is not enough to make sex morally okay. One could still have a problem with incest, etc. And one could still maintain that when an enormously powerful married man in his fifties makes a pass at a girl barely 20 years old—a girl who happens to be his workplace subordinate—that the man is behaving like a moral renegade (a "cad" in our quaint jargon) and could be despised because of it.

TOM FORD
Via the Internet

Scientological

To the editors:

Your Notebook item on the Church of Scientology in Germany ("Star Struck," March 9) repeated the truly stupid and irresponsible speculation from *George* magazine that John Travolta got President Clinton to help the Church of Scientology in Germany in exchange for Travolta's softening his presidential portrayal in the movie *Primary Colors*.

Dumb. Dumb. Dumb. The movie had been completed a full month before the president and John Travolta even spoke about Germany, and that was a short, off-the-cuff conversation.

The real truth here is that the State Department first carved out the U.S. position on German discrimination against Scientologists—American citizens included—in its 1993 Human Rights report (years before the book *Primary Colors* was even published) and has continued and expanded on that criticism each year since. It has done so despite the public protests of German officials simply because the information presented to career State Department personnel has been compelling *and* verifiable.

The recently released U.N. report on religious intolerance in Germany has verified that there is a problem with intolerance against religious minorities including Muslims, Mormons, Unificationists, Baha'is, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Scientologists.

ALEXANDER R. JONES
Church of Scientology International
Washington, D.C.

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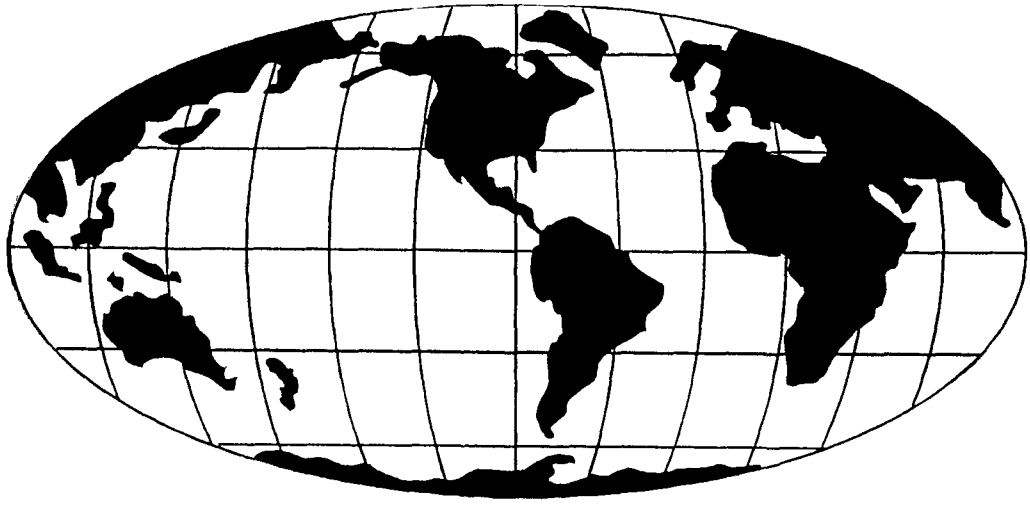

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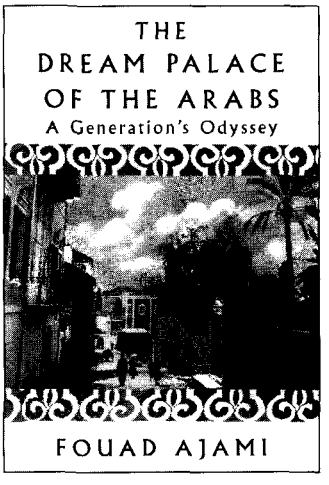

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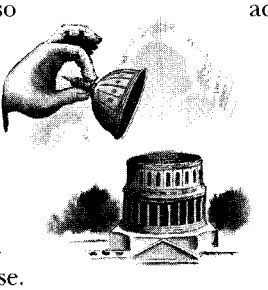
FROM WASHINGTON

No cigar

Among the many guilty pleasures our public-health-conscious president has been known to savor is the occasional fine cigar. He lit one up to celebrate the rescue of downed American pilot Scott O'Grady from Bosnia in 1995. (But the first lady insisted he do so on the Truman balcony, since she has declared the White House a smoke-free zone.) He has been spotted chomping a stogie on a golf course in the Virgin Islands. And, appropriately enough, he popped one in his mouth to celebrate victory in the Paula Jones case. Never mind that a new study by the National Cancer Institute confirms what scientists have known for years: Cigar smoking causes mouth, throat, and lung cancer just like cigarette smoking. The risks are great even if you don't smoke many cigars—even, yes, if you don't inhale.



How does President Clinton rationalize his behavior? The same weaselly way millions of other tobacco users have done and will do. "I'm allergic to cigars, so I don't smoke many anymore, but I smoke a handful a year, probably," he said at a 1995 press conference. "And I probably shouldn't. And I try not to do it in any way that sets a bad example.... Cigars and pipes were not found by the FDA to be part of this.... I try never to do it where people see."

Does this make him a hypocrite? Or should we think of the president as a victim—his better judgment trumped by the peer pressure of his golf cronies and the cigar industry's equally irresistible sex-tinged marketing campaign (a campaign that has increased consumption of their toxic product some 50 percent in the last five years)? Then again, maybe it's better to think of him as a mature adult who has weighed the known risks of cigar smoking and decided that, for him, they are outweighed by the sublime pleasures of an occasional puff.

Actually, I think that all three descriptions apply to some degree—to the president and to everyone else who lights up. Indeed, the president's sporadic cigar habit nicely illustrates certain moral and psychological complexities that have been obscured in the rush to punish Big Tobacco. No one can question the innocence of people who get cancer because they happen to live downwind from a toxin-spewing chemical plant. But, when people get cancer because they ignore clear warning labels and, at least initially (before they become too hooked to stop), choose to consume a legal product, that's a different story. Tobacco-related illness is a public health crisis that could not happen without some active participation by the public itself.

Don't get me wrong. I want accountability for the tobacco industry, which built its customer base through massive deception about nicotine's addictive properties and ads aimed at teens. I just don't want to impose corporate accountability in a way that undermines the whole notion of individual accountability.

Yet the administration's campaign—now abetted by the Republican Congress, whose members have read the same polls as the president and vice president—does this in two ways. First, the politicians have framed the entire discussion in terms of "protecting our kids." This is a standard demagogic ploy: Who's in favor of harming our kids? And, no doubt, a massive anti-smoking education campaign, coupled with higher prices for cigarettes, will probably achieve the worthy goal of deterring teen smoking (to the extent it doesn't make Camels even more of a symbol of youthful rebellion than they already are). It is, furthermore, appropriate for the government to treat teens paternalistically since, by definition, they are not yet adults and therefore lack a full measure of moral agency and accountability.

But the tobacco legislation currently under discussion would reach well beyond these objectives to include tight FDA regulation of nicotine, or a ban on it, as well as sweeping restrictions on the content of cigarette advertising—an infringement on free speech made no less troubling by the fact that the companies would be consenting to it under heavy official pressure. This raises the question: To what extent are the politicians actually proposing to treat grown-ups like kids? Even assuming the taxes deter teen smokers as promised, this means

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 4, 1998

INVESTIGATION NEGATION

Last year brought a bizarre postscript to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. James Earl Ray, who pled guilty to murdering King but has denied it ever since, was absolved of the crime. The absolution came from none other than Dexter King, the martyr's son. "I believe you, and my family believes you," said Dexter of Ray's protestations that, despite his confession, and despite the discovery of his fingerprints on the murder weapon, he was a fall guy for the mysterious "Raoul."

Now the King family has gone one step further: The civil rights prophet's heirs are marking the thirtieth anniversary of his assassination by asking the Department of Justice to conduct another investigation to determine whether Ray was a patsy for a government conspiracy. Earlier this month, King's widow, Coretta Scott King, accompanied by no less a personage than former Atlanta Mayor (and King aide) Andrew Young, made this request during a two-hour meeting with Janet Reno. King said Reno had listened "very sympathetically" and would decide the matter soon.

We hope that the attorney general has the courage to say no. Talk of a governmental conspiracy to assassinate King is preposterous. While it is true that FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover plotted to harass and stymie King and other black civil rights leaders whom he loathed, there is no evidence that he or any other government official played any role in King's murder. David Garrow, a highly sympathetic King biographer and Emory University professor, has convincingly laid out the case against Ray. An even more exhaustive account is contained in Gerald Posner's *Killing the Dream*, which concludes: "There is no doubt that James Earl Ray shot and killed Martin Luther King Jr."

Alas, the orchestrated effort to find a conspiracy behind the King assassination—like similar efforts to pin the murder of John F. Kennedy on the Mafia or the CIA—has very little to do with facts. Conspiracy theories are, rather, an all-too-familiar feature of our political culture. Most recently, we have seen the phenomenon in its right-wing variant, in connection with the death of Vince Foster. Investigations by two independent counsels have demonstrated that he killed himself. Foster's family is convinced his death was a suicide. Yet the Foster murder conspiracy industry continues to thrive.

To be sure, genuinely aggrieved people understandably turn to conspiracy theories because it is so difficult to accept that an enormous historical tragedy such as the death of Martin Luther King could be the work of a lone, insignificant individual. But that does not explain the motives of people like Jerry Falwell (the Foster conspiracy theorist par excellence) and Oliver Stone (the JFK conspiracy theorist with whom the King family has struck a movie deal). Though not themselves understandably aggrieved, they propagate conspiracy theories to exploit the grievances of others for their own psychic, ideological, and financial benefit.

So why shouldn't Reno just investigate King's death and quickly prove the conspiratorialists wrong? What could be the harm? The trouble is that conspiracy theories are essentially irrefutable, which is why they are so culturally durable and politically satisfying. Even if the evidence in the case wasn't already 30 years old, and even if it hadn't already been sifted twice by Congress, Reno would never be able to quell the doubts about King.

Consider the CIA-crack conspiracy episode of 1996. A story in *The San Jose Mercury News* contended that the CIA, through its Nicaraguan contra minions, had plotted to introduce crack to the inner cities. Outraged black talk radio hosts and political leaders demanded a full investigation. Even though the charges were absurd on their face—and the *News* itself later backed away from the story—CIA Director John Deutch dutifully visited South Central Los Angeles, promising to conduct an investigation. The inquiry, in turn, found that the allegations were baseless. Yet this finding itself didn't satisfy anyone. Rather, it passed into the conspiracy lore. The fact that the CIA had gone so far as to issue its own formal whitewash simply proved the importance of the conspiracy.

Janet Reno should indeed treat the King family's request as a historic opportunity—not to make amends for some imagined federal murder plot but, rather, to take a stand against one of the most debilitating ills of our political culture. She can do this by stating forthrightly that the Clinton administration will not launch a new King assassination investigation and that it will not do so because it will not be a party to paranoia. Rather than patronizing the conspiratorial impulse, Reno ought to repudiate it. •

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NOTEBOOK

UNSCOM WATCH, III: When we last checked up on the United Nations weapons inspectors in Iraq, at about the end of March, they were making their first visits to Saddam Hussein's eight presidential palaces. These complexes, over which a war was nearly fought, actually consist of some 1,000 buildings spread out over 19 square miles. Unfettered access to them, it will be recalled, was the purported bottom line of the deal struck between Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Saddam Hussein. The good news is that the inspectors encountered no canisters of anthrax or VX nerve-gas missiles during their visits. But this is hardly cause for celebration. Not only did Iraq have months of advance notice before the inspectors arrived, but these initial visits were not even intended to discover anything consequential. Rather, the first visits were simply meant to establish a precedent of access. The U.N. inspectors have repeatedly made this clear ever since the February 23 deal brokered by Annan. "It is essential to note that the fundamental issue of continued access is by no means solved and has only been postponed to the future," Charles Duelfer, the deputy chief inspector for UNSCOM, wrote in a report to Annan. Yet the Iraqis have their own ideas about the future. They are already suggesting that these futile preliminary surveys of Saddam's palaces prove that the U.N. inspections should end. Meanwhile, a presidential report to Congress said: "UNSCOM is still unable to verify that all of Iraq's SCUD missile warheads filled with biological agents ... have been destroyed.... Iraq has never provided a full and accurate account of its indigenous efforts to develop nuclear weapons and prohibited long-range missiles."

BUDGET BLUSTER: House Budget Chairman John Kasich calls himself a principled fiscal conservative, and, generally speaking, he is. Kasich has frequently bucked members of his own party who have proposed new spending or tax cuts that would have inflated the deficit. So imagine our surprise when, this past Sunday, on NBC's "Meet the Press," Kasich took the following swipe at the Congressional Budget Office, whose projections for Social Security cast doubt upon the viability of *his* plan for privatizing the system: "Oh, the Congressional Budget Office hasn't been right in about a billion years. I mean, come on, that's just a bunch of government estimators." True, it's not unusual for the minority party in Congress to assail the CBO's reliability—since the majority party in Congress gets to appoint the CBO director. But Kasich belongs to the majority. Anyway, notwithstanding the usual partisan sneers, most budget experts believe that the CBO is one of the most reliable sources of financial analysis in the federal government. Indeed, during the budget crisis two years ago, one major sticking point was whether to use CBO numbers for revenue and spending projections. Clinton wanted to use numbers from his own Office of Management and Budget. Republicans, nervous that OMB's numbers would favor the president, insisted on using CBO numbers for the deal—and they prevailed. As one Republican congressman put it, "What's at stake here is the integrity of the CBO." He went on to note that the CBO had earned its reputation for accuracy and reliability. And who was that congressman? John Kasich, of course.

THE CABLE GUY: The packaging of the presidency reached a new peak of efficiency last week. The occasion was President Clinton's participation in yet another nationally televised town meeting, this one on the subject of race and sports—a matter of vital presidential concern if ever there was one. But, even though this was billed as a component event of the White House-sponsored national dialogue on race, the president himself did not exactly control the conversation. Instead, he seemed to be acting like just the most important guest on a chat show entirely engineered by the private, commercial cable network, ESPN (a subsidiary of Disney). The network chose all the other guests, the format, and probably even the wardrobe; then it doled out a meager four minutes of taped highlights to all other networks, including the noncommercial, public service network, C-SPAN. When the White House received complaints about the lack of Hispanics and Native Americans on the panel, they directed all callers to ESPN. "We told them these were not our choices," says a race commission spokesperson. What's even more curious is that this entire presidential event on a matter of general concern to the American public was brought to you by Sprint, a telecommunications giant with vast interests in federal regulatory and contracting policies. What's next, Bill Wear by Nike? •

THE HARD QUESTIONS

BEYOND CONSENT

By Jean Bethke Elshtain

The concept of consent seems to have acquired magical cleansing properties, like a brand of detergent with its own built-in stain remover. Consent is invoked incessantly in current discussions of the president's behavior and the public's insouciance concerning that behavior. Why does the public not care? Because it isn't clear anyone was harmed, we are told. And, besides, with the possible exception of Kathleen Willey—and why should we believe an obviously hysterical woman?—all the many

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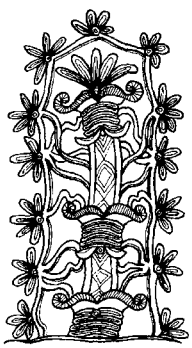
alleged, documented, and narrated sexual encounters of a small army of women with the president, before or during his presidency, took place via the magic of consent. One might consider the alleged Lewinsky sexual contract a bit vulgar. But she consented, after all, and, we are reminded, she was above the age of consent when her involvement with the president began. So what's the problem?

There is, of course, great force in the use of the term consent in a culture as rights-based, as legalistic, and as committed to the view that individuals are free-standing and self-sovereign as our own. Consent carries with it the presupposition that an individual is capable of making up his or her own mind and of being responsible for his or her behavior. If we stumble, we must pick ourselves up; if we are caught committing an infraction, we must pay the socially dictated price. Historically, political struggles raged around who was capable of consent and who was in a situation of permanent nonage. At one point women were perpetual children, as were slaves, together with all the hapless souls usually called "Idiots, Cretins, and Madmen." Criminals were shoved into the nonconsenting category as well, as long as their criminal status was socially enjoined. But the folks in these various categories fought their way out of political and legal infantilization. The category of consent has been extended so far that "functioning" persons with mental retardation are now incorporated within the legal definition of consenting adults for the purpose of the franchise, marriage—even contracts.



Children continue as nonconsenters, of course, although there are dissenters even here. I recall a bizarre episode in the late 1960s (when else?) when I found myself in a group of self-declared anarchists who were railing against various tyrannies, including the fact that children were not permitted to vote. "How far down would you go?" I queried. And the guru of the group, a senior anarchist of rather authoritarian ways, proclaimed that he would extend the vote to four-year-olds. I opined that when a four-year-old raises her hand it usually means "I have to go to the bathroom." But this quip didn't impress the assorted radicals.

What this would mean in practice, of course, is that very young children could "consent" to sex with much older adults. But isn't such a relationship bound to be exploitative? As a society, we have made this determination, and that is why the age of consent for sex is most often, for most purposes, 16. Surely, however, consent does not and should not exhaust what we have to say about sex between 16-year-olds and, say, 50-year-olds. There is something that strikes us as inappropriate, sordid, unethical, and likely exploitative about such a relationship, and for good reason. A 50-year-old, whether male or female, has years of experience and seasoning behind him or her. We expect—or used to expect—greater maturity in judgment from a "real" adult; a 16-year-old is still a kid. That a particular action or relationship is or was narrowly legal or consensual does not mean we find it good or decent or fair or reasonable.

Take this one step further. Consider how impoverished our moral universe would be if the only thing we could say about the sexual abuse of an underage child by an adult was that the relationship was not consensual. Consent doesn't come close to covering what is wrong about an adult preying on children. I fear, however, that we have entered a cultural moment in which the exhaustion of our ethical and civic repertoire is a real danger. We think we have everything covered if a legalistic and contractual language is intact. But this is not true.

It is worth reminding ourselves that there are all sorts of things we do not permit people to consent to. We do not allow people to consent to sell themselves into slavery. We do not permit people to get other people to consent to kill them. (Although we're getting closer to crossing that particular line all the time.) We do not permit two drivers to consent to a high-speed road chase. We do not allow a cabal of consenting students to cheat on an examination. No one can "consent" to violate an oath.

Consent is a narrow legal term that confers a certain sort of standing. It is a concept that a rights-based liberal society cannot do without. But it is also a concept that such a society can do altogether too much with. When we make consent do all the work for us, our political and ethical vocabulary languishes. To say, then, that a sexual relationship was presumably consensual ought to be the beginning, not the end, of the discussion if the issue is the wisdom, decency, discretion, fairness, maturity, and judgment of a president or a colleague or the next-door neighbor. Consent can do many things. But it isn't a magical conceptual detergent. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

NO-COMMENT MAN

By Dana Milbank

There are many awkward moments these days in the professional life of James Kennedy, special adviser to the White House counsel, but perhaps none so odd as his trips to the newsstand to buy the supermarket tabloids. "BILL CLINTON ASSAULTED ME RIGHT UNDER HILLARY'S NOSE," screams an issue of the *Star* that lies on the floor next to Kennedy's desk in the Old Executive Office Building. A photo depicts the president, smiling, with his arm around a blonde. "Bill Clinton brazenly stroked the breast of a

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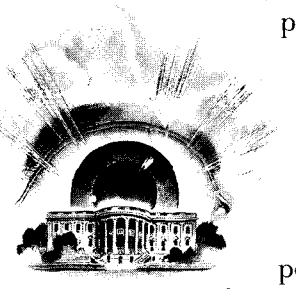
young woman who worked for him ... for nearly 40 minutes," the story begins. Beneath that tabloid are others with headlines like "NEW INTERN MYSTERY" and "SLAP HIM." "I don't dare put in for reimbursement for these," Kennedy says.

His discomfort is understandable. On January 8, when the speechwriter for Standard & Poor's took a job in the White House, it was on the understanding he'd be dealing with Starr's investigations, not the *Star*'s investigations. He was to replace spinmaster Lanny Davis, who dealt with the campaign finance scandal. "It looked to be a calmer era, a more manageable environment," Kennedy says. But, before he showed up for his new job, Bimbroglio broke. From the start, he confesses, he's felt a bit out of his depth, unable to say much because he doesn't know much, unable to learn more because it might earn him a subpoena, and unable to satisfy hungry, angry reporters, who curse him as the embodiment of a suddenly tight-lipped White House. "I have to keep thinking up new ways of saying 'no comment,'" he says. "I'm thinking of using other languages."

"Any matters before a sealed proceeding cannot be discussed by us," Kennedy told *The New York Times.*

"Our position is that the sealed nature of the proceeding precludes us from commenting in any way on it," he told *The Washington Times.*

"We are unable to discuss anything that was before a sealed hearing or before the secret grand jury," he told the *Los Angeles Times.*



The Washington Post published a long list of scandal questions that it had posed to press secretary Mike McCurry and that were then referred to Kennedy. "But Kennedy, contacted later, could provide detailed answers to none of these questions," the *Post* reported.

Kennedy's comments (or lack thereof) epitomize the White House standoff with the press. Never warm, relations have, in the current scandal, reached a new level of bitterness. Kennedy's predecessor, the loquacious Lanny, fed the press a steady diet of background leaks; this, in turn, afforded the White House a crucial measure of spin control even during the campaign finance scandal's most difficult moments. Kennedy, meanwhile, is widely perceived in the press as useless, and the scandal, not coincidentally, has proven much more difficult for the White House to manage.

Much of this is beyond Kennedy's control. Davis, after all, was dealing with a congressional investigation—a political event that demanded counterpunches, not a criminal proceeding that punishes stray words. And, unlike Davis and Davis's predecessor, Mark Fabiani, Kennedy isn't a lawyer—and therefore doesn't have the same lawyer-client protection from subpoena. But Kennedy serves as a punching bag for journalists upset with a White House gone completely incommunicado. Reporters for the *Los Angeles Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe,* and other big dailies complain that they have been frozen out by the White House on the scandal while some of the president's confidants leak to *The Washington Post* and, to a lesser extent, *The New York Times.* Journalists speculate, for example, that Clinton's men, most likely Mickey Kantor or Harold Ickes, leaked Clinton's Paula Jones deposition to the *Post.* In other words, one of the outlets that has been toughest on Clinton got one of the juiciest tidbits. *Time* similarly has griped to the White House that *Newsweek* is getting White House leaks despite that magazine's far tougher coverage of Clinton.

The White House is likely trying to make amends. After the Paula Jones case was dismissed, Clinton gave an exclusive interview to *Time* aboard Air Force One. (McCurry, meanwhile, is said to have taunted *Newsweek*'s correspondent about Jones's defeat.) But, for the most part, the media continue to seethe. "There's a lot of frustration out there," says Kennedy, a soft-spoken man of 44 who wears a trim gray beard and tortoiseshell glasses. "There's some validity" to the complaint that tougher critics get better treatment, Kennedy says. "I'd like to do something to correct it." Problem is, he and the press office are as frozen out as the press. "I don't know if there's an alternative," says one official who actually does know what's going on. "This isn't some quack congressional committee. It's better you guys be a little upset with us than if the independent counsel strikes at us."

Even Davis, who left behind a bottle of port and three shot glasses for Kennedy, says he wouldn't be volunteering information in the current mess. Last year, he says, "we would want to get a story out early so we could control it rather than let the Republicans leak it." That helps explain why the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Journal,* which dominated the campaign finance story, now trail the *Times* and the *Post.* Before, the administration was leaking bad news, and it figured the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Journal* were more likely to bury it.

It's all a strange world for Jim Kennedy, who worked 17 years for the squeaky clean Joseph Lieberman, both in the Senate and in the Connecticut attorney general's office. Kennedy passed up a job as Davis's assistant a year ago, signing on with S&P instead. But his old friend Doug Sosnik, who had been Chris Dodd's chief of staff, helped lure him to the White House this year. After Bimbroglio broke, S&P offered to let him reconsider, but Kennedy didn't budge: "People who head for the hills at the first sign of artillery are not very worthy in combat."

Kennedy gets what information he can from his boss, Special Counsel Lanny Breuer, and from Charles Ruff, the White House counsel. The lawyers and the spokesmen meet twice daily, but Kennedy is the first to admit he doesn't press for much knowledge. To this day, he says, he doesn't really know if the White House has claimed executive privilege, even though he reads it in the papers. Kennedy hasn't even *met* Kantor. This some-

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times puts Kennedy in a tricky spot, as when he was told to deliver a statement on a Sunday in February saying that "the White House has not been involved in any way with private investigators." This turned out not to be true.

The Jones dismissal doesn't affect Kennedy directly. (His portfolio is strictly limited to Ken Starr's investigation.) But that development, and general scandal fatigue, are causing journalists to tire of the larger story. Reporters at more than one newspaper are trying to ease out of the sex story, even requesting other assignments. They find it frustrating: The facts, by their nature, are often unknowable, and any high principles at stake are obscured by the tawdry details.

Meanwhile, though there's not much professional pleasure in being the no-comment guy, Kennedy finds job satisfaction in other ways. He wanders the ceremonial rooms in the Old Executive Office Building. He sat in on Clinton's Northern Ireland address in the Oval Office. His daughter got to meet the president. "There's something to be said for being part of a larger thing," Kennedy says. "It's a moment in history—not necessarily a bright moment, but a moment." •

Ulster's Protestants ponder peace.

TRIMBLE'S TROUBLES

By Fintan O'Toole

On Good Friday, when it seemed that there would be a peace deal in Northern Ireland after all, I spoke with a former party colleague of David Trimble, the leader of the largest Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists and, as such, the likely head of a new administration in Belfast. He remarked that Trimble had just walked "the loneliest path that any Unionist leader in recent memory has had to walk." Talk of loneliness seemed, in the midst of a huge international media event, rather odd. Yet, as more and more Unionists deserted Trimble and denounced the compromise he agreed to, it began to seem more apt.

Protestant opposition will not be confined to the followers of the perennially hard-line Ian Paisley. Significant sections of the Ulster Unionists and the Orange Order, the Protestant fraternity to which they are allied, are angered at what they see as a sellout. Thus, the key question about the immediate future of Northern Ireland is: Can Trimble persuade a majority of Protestants to support him in the referendum on May 22? After the euphoria, there comes the sobering realization of how much depends on an irascible 53-year-old who did not become a full-time politician until 1990 and who has spent virtually all of his adult life on the law faculty at Queen's University in Belfast.

The peace agreement became possible in the first place because two men involved in the conflict from its early days changed their minds. One changed slowly; the other quickly. Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Catholic nationalist Irish Republican Army, prepared his followers over many years for the fact that they were not, in the medium term, going to get what they wanted—a united Ireland, free of British control. When the time came to make that concession in writing, he knew that some of his former admirers would denounce him as a traitor. But he had a core of trusted allies around him and knew he would take most of his people with him.

David Trimble never told his supporters what is for them an equally unpalatable truth: The price of remaining within the United Kingdom is radical concessions to Irish nationalism. On the contrary, they believed he would never soften Protestant resistance to change. Even when he led them into the peace talks, many Unionists believed that their leader was playing a clever game. Like them, he abhorred the very idea of negotiating with Sinn Fein and with the Irish government. But he also knew that the Unionists would pay a heavy political price if he ever said so openly. So the prevailing view was that Trimble went into the negotiations, not to cut a deal, but to avoid the blame when the whole thing fell apart.

There was, in Trimble's past, a good deal of support for the notion that he was essentially a reactionary who had learned to temper his instincts for the sake of his image. In the early 1970s, he joined Vanguard, a militant Protestant movement that organized fascist-style "mass rallies" at which its leader, William Craig, would arrive flanked by motorcycle outriders to inspect ranks of men drawn up in military formation. Trimble attended many of them and eventually became Craig's deputy. At least for a time, Vanguard's substance as well as its style had a whiff of Nuremberg. Craig spoke of a unilateral declaration of independence from Britain and speculated about a doomsday situation in which "it may be our job to liquidate the enemy." Asked once if he contemplated the killing of all Catholics, he replied: "It might not go as far as that, but it could go as far as killing."

Vanguard eventually collapsed. Trimble returned to academia and quietly joined the mainstream Ulster Unionist Party. His uncomfortable associations with violent rhetoric resurfaced, however, in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement signed by Margaret Thatcher and Irish Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald in 1985. Trimble joined an extra-parliamentary opposition movement, the Ulster Clubs, and said he would not object to "mobilization and citizens' army calls," explaining that "I would personally draw the line at terrorism and serious violence. But, if we are talking about a campaign that involves demonstrations and so on, then a certain element of violence may be inescapable."

Yet, in the perverse politics of Northern Ireland, Trimble's hard-line past may actually increase his chances of

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getting Protestant support for the deal. For one thing, it is hard for his opponents to paint William Craig's former deputy as a weak-kneed liberal. Trimble's former flirtations with violent rhetoric inoculate him against ultra-Unionist charges that he is too soft—just as Gerry Adams's previous involvement with the Irish Republican Army credentialized him with the ultra-nationalists.

Also, Trimble's contradictions mirror the Protestants' profoundly ambiguous attitude toward Britain. On the one hand, they feel culturally, historically, and ethnically British. On the other, they are deeply distrustful of British governments of whatever hue. They feel, with good reason, that, however loyal they may be to Britain, Britain's loyalty to them has, since the conflict began in 1968, become ever more tenuous.

An understanding of that fact is what pushed David Trimble into doing a deal. He knew that as time passes the position of those who want to keep Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom will become inevitably weaker. Their choice is essentially between accepting change while they still can influence its direction or watching in impotent rage as things slip slowly beyond their control.

In an interview that he gave in October 1991 for a book by political scientist Feargal Cochrane, Trimble said that the maintenance of the Union with Britain was "pretty high up" on his list of priorities but not "an absolute end in itself." He pointed out that "a union requires two parties, and ... if the English should decide to say, 'Frankly, we don't want the Union anymore,' in that case we would say that we cannot unilaterally sustain the Union. And so one has to say that there is, in the last analysis, another goal, which is to find some other political structure as a means of advancing the well-being and continuing existence of the Ulster British people."

This "other goal" is what Trimble embraced on Good Friday. He accepted that Britain, as much as the Northern Irish Protestants, decides the terms for the Union. And gradually, since 1985, those terms have changed. Even under Margaret Thatcher, it was becoming obvious that there were conditions attached to Northern Ireland's continued membership in the U.K. Unless Catholics could be mollified by equality, a share of political power, and closer links with the Republic of Ireland, Britain's desire to stick with the marriage would gradually diminish. Protestants don't like this, but they have the consolation of knowing that roughly the same thing has happened to their Catholic neighbors. They, too, have been finding that the people they want to unite with—the citizens of the Republic of Ireland—don't want them on just any terms. The same way the British don't want a United Kingdom with a permanently disgruntled Irish Catholic minority, the Irish don't want a United Ireland with a permanently disgruntled Protestant minority.

The fact that Catholic nationalists had to make substantial concessions will help Trimble sell the deal to his own side. So will the biggest weakness of his Protestant opponents—their lack of a plausible way to make the British accept them on their own terms. Trimble's Protestant critics can attack the deal that their leader has done. None of them can credibly say that a substantially better deal was, is, or will be on offer from London. The real alternative is not an unchanged Union with Britain. It is alienation from this, or any other, British government.

Now, Trimble can at least present his people with a document that sets clear limits to the amount of change they will have to face in the new millennium. His opponents can offer only short-term trouble and long-term uncertainty. However lonesome the walk David Trimble has made, that long march into the future without maps or signposts would be far more forlorn.

FINTAN O'TOOLE writes for the New York *Daily News.*

Muammar Qaddafi, literary lion.

THE IGNOBLE BARD

By Nurith C. Aizenman

Perhaps you're under the impression that Muammar Qaddafi is a ruthless dictator, a madman even, who has ruled Libya with an iron fist while sponsoring violent acts of terrorism abroad. Well, Alain Stanké would like to set you straight. A Canadian publisher whose self-professed mission is "to bring out new literary talents," Stanké has just made his latest discovery. Colonel Qaddafi, it turns out, is not a brutal despot, not an unbalanced egomaniac, but ... *un homme de lettres*—a Bedouin poet "whose ideas flow from the ever-developing and conflicting reality in search of what is best and most beautiful." How fortuitous, then, notes Stanké, that "[f]or the past few years Muammar Qaddafi ... has taken the habit of frequently withdrawing into his tent, in the desert, in order to meditate, study and ... write!" Stanké's firm has translated and published the result of these labors in a newly released volume entitled *Escape to Hell and Other Stories.* ("You already know his name; now read his book!" urge the ads.)

The book also includes a fawning introduction written by none other than former JFK press secretary and onetime ABC news correspondent Pierre Salinger. Salinger's most recent claim to fame was his quirky 1996 crusade to promote conspiracy theories about the crash of TWA Flight 800, largely based on evidence posted on the Internet. He is now apparently determined to shed whatever vestiges of credibility he has left. "Western audiences have seen Muammar Qaddafi as provocative, defiant opponent of United States foreign policy, Qaddafi as prophet," writes Salinger in *Escape to Hell*'s preface, "and now we see Qaddafi as writer and essayist."

Stanké International Publishing is optimistically

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printing 50,000 copies of the book for distribution in North America, but Qaddafi is not likely to crack the *New York Times* best-seller list. It's not simply the scathing references to a perfidious nation called "Amelica." It's that Qaddafi's writing is just a wee bit, well, turgid. "Is death male or female?" begins one piece. "God only knows." Indeed.

Notwithstanding the book's title, none of the works in *Escape to Hell and Other Stories* can really be called *stories*; they are more like stream-of-consciousness rants. Alas, the downside of being an absolute ruler seems to be that it's hard to find an aggressive editor. In a piece titled "The Earth," for example, Qaddafi starts by laying out his main (and only) theme—"beware of destroying the earth because you will then lose everything"—and then blithely proceeds to restate it in every conceivable formulation: "the earth is the container for ... nourishment ... so do not break the only container we have"; "the earth is the lung through which you breathe, so if you destroy it you will have no way to breathe"; "the earth is your mother ... if you are too harsh with her you will not find another." The book's press release is not making an idle boast when it describes Qaddafi as "a man ... fascinated with ... metaphors."

MUAMMAR QADDAFI BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Of course, there may be more to Qaddafi's eagerness to share this imagery than mere literary ambition. In 1992, Libya was slapped with U.N. sanctions for refusing to let the U.S. or Britain extradite two Libyan intelligence officials accused of participating in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. International flights as well as the sale of some aviation, defense, and oil equipment to Libya have been banned ever since. Though nowhere near as debilitating as the sanctions on Iraq (Libya still boasts oil revenues of $9 billion per year), these measures have clearly put a crimp in Libya's economy. Qaddafi has been lobbying hard to have them lifted and, at times, *Escape to Hell* reads like a (slightly inchoate) plea to win the West's indulgence.

Which may explain how Salinger, a once-respected-journalist-turned-"independent public relations director," came into the picture. It was Salinger who helped find an English-language publisher for Qaddafi's work—a favor to Qaddafi's French-language publisher, Salinger says, adding that he has never represented Libya or any clients with Libyan interests. Salinger is, however, currently representing a small company called Archive Unlimited that, he says, "is doing something with leaders all over the world." (Just what that something is he would not disclose.) When the company found out that Alain Stanké was going to Libya to discuss publication of the book, Salinger explains, "they asked me to go with him so that ... I could have a private meeting with Qaddafi about Archive Unlimited afterwards."

Salinger says Qaddafi's French publishers suggested he write an introduction to the English translation, and he agreed to do so gratis. In that introduction, Salinger argues that the U.S. and U.K. "were aware that the [Lockerbie] bombing had been carried out by Iran and Syria" but "decided ... to attribute responsibility ... to Muammar Qaddafi" because, after the Gulf war, "the Syrians, and not the Libyans, were crucial to Middle East peace talks." Salinger knows this because "I was the only one who interrogated the two Libyan suspects." (By this he means that the Libyan government permitted him to interview the men in their homes for ABC News.) Other prominent analysts have certainly suggested that Syria and Iran might also have been involved in the Lockerbie bombing, but Salinger is the only one to maintain that Libya is innocent.

This is not the only matter on which Salinger parts company with conventional wisdom. Libya's leader, writes Salinger, is not such a meanie after all—just a little misunderstood. For instance, "When ... Qaddafi took power he effected huge changes in restructuring the nation to make sure that there were no homeless people or unemployed or badly paid citizens." Amnesty International, of course, has focused instead on Qaddafi's "absolute disregard for human rights" as demonstrated by the continued "arbitrary arrest, torture, extrajudicial executions, and 'disappearances'" of hundreds of Libyan citizens. But Salinger chooses not to address such nuances.

He does, however, take on the Clinton administration's assertion that, contrary to Qaddafi's claims, the Libyan leader still maintains links with international terrorist groups. "I was allowed to visit areas the U.S. government had proclaimed as terrorist camps," writes Salinger. "They had been put to a stop and turned into places of residence for Palestinian immigrants." Simi-

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larly, Salinger—well-versed, presumably, in the intricacies of chemical manufacturing—assures us that "while in Libya, I was allowed to visit an area that the Americans said was being used to create chemical weapons. When I went there, it was clear that they were not creating such armaments."

As for Qaddafi, he prefers to appeal to his readers' sympathy. Life at the top, he implies in the book's title story, is not all it's cracked up to be. "I feel that the masses . . . follow me around, burning me with their gaze. Even when they are applauding me, it feels like they are pricking me." And everyone's so damn needy. "People snap at me whenever they see me: build us a better house! Get us a better telephone line! Build us a road upon the sea! Make a public park for us!" Salinger was right about one thing: *Escape to Hell* "gives a very special view about an original mentality."

And the book does reveal something else—something of actual political significance: Qaddafi's careful religious balancing act. References to the Koran are sprinkled through virtually every page, yet more than one story is devoted to mocking Islamic scholars for neglecting national progress in order to focus on questions like: "Was the camel of Ali, may God preserve him, white or brown?" This ability to cloak himself in the mantle of religion (one of Qaddafi's first acts upon seizing power in 1969 was to reinstate Islamic law in Libya) while keeping religious groups firmly in check (one of his second acts was to confiscate religious properties and arrest Islamic leaders) has served Qaddafi remarkably well in a region frequently rocked by Islamic fundamentalist movements. This may provide a clue as to how a man Anwar Sadat once described as "one hundred percent sick" has managed to hold on to power for three decades. And he may endure for far longer. According to Qaddafi's publisher, "three films based on the short stories will soon be in the movie theaters." •

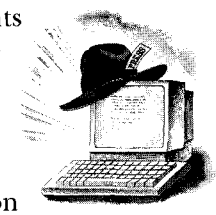
BALTIMORE DISPATCH

CHAOS HIGH

By Mark Stricherz

It's not every day that a high school makes national news, but then it's not every day a principal suspends nearly two-thirds of the student body—which is what happened last November at Baltimore's Northern High School. When principal Alice Morgan Brown announced over the public address system that students should pick up their report cards after school, 1,200 students disobeyed, and she decided to suspend all of them. It was, some said, the largest suspension in the history of American education.

In the media frenzy that ensued, some hailed Brown for her gutsy attempt to impose order, while others called for her dismissal. Within days, everyone from National Public Radio to CNN had dispatched correspondents; Brown even appeared on the "Today" show. And, for a week or two, education experts emerged to explain why the crisis at Northern was an argument in favor of this or that pet school-reform idea. But all of the hand-wringing over the suspensions obscured the real story. Whatever Brown's culpability, the roots of Northern's crisis lie not on school grounds but in the ghetto where most Northern students live—and where the problems are so profound as to be beyond the reach of local and even state government.



To get to the cafeteria at Northern, you have to pass through the school's lone main entrance—the place where Brown, on the day of the suspensions, dramatically (if temporarily) barred the doors to an estimated 1,000 students, many of whom refused her order to go to their homerooms while chanting, "Hell, no, we won't go!" Then you walk through long, windowless corridors and pass about 30 lockers that appear to have been blown up by cherry bombs. In front of the cafeteria, off to the left, there's a wide black grate that prevents students from roaming the halls. Inside, eight of the cafeteria's 30 benches are broken, their legs crumpled. Red soft drink is splattered across the room.

According to police, the cafeteria played a role in Northern's latest incident, the murder of 15-year-old Wayne Martin Rabb Jr. On January 9, Rabb apparently got into an argument over, literally, spilled milk; after school, three teens allegedly beat him with a baseball bat so severely that he needed an ambulance. A month later, Rabb was shot twice outside a video store, allegedly by a 16-year-old who had attended Northern.

Such behavior is pretty much the norm at ghetto schools. In 1993, 23 percent of urban school districts reported drive-by shootings at school. Even by these standards, though, Northern—a 20-acre campus set in a mostly blue-collar part of northeastern Baltimore—is in serious trouble. Longtime *Baltimore Sun* education writer Mike Bowler says the school has become "a Kafkaesque nightmare," and, except for a few fine academic programs, he's probably right. Last school year opened with the rape of a 14-year-old girl in a bathroom, and it ended as an off-campus thug shot at a school cop. (All this despite a force of up to 15 school security guards.) Seventy-seven percent of students are "chronically absent"—they miss over 20 school days a year.

In general, Northern's teachers express deep frustration. In November, Mary Robinson quit after one student threatened in class to kill her, she says. "He said, 'I will be back for you, and I will be back to drop you,'" Robinson recalls. At least three teachers in 1997 were assaulted. "We may have one or two schools that have similar problems, but the problems at Northern are extreme, unusual," says Marcia Brown, former president

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of the city's teachers union.

School insiders blame Principal Brown, a former professor at Morgan State University who had never been a principal before. "You know what happened," chortles French teacher Stanley Naj, "when El Niño dropped unexpectedly on Florida?" Brown's critics have a point. For the first few weeks of school, hundreds of students lacked schedules, and teachers lacked class lists. "It was total chaos," says one teacher. "It took weeks to correct." And never did school officials return a phone call Wayne Rabb's parents had made after their son told them he felt unsafe at school—a call urging that their son be transferred. (Brown declined to be interviewed for this story.)

But in many ways the problems at Northern are not really problems with Northern. They have more to do with problems the famous Coleman report on blacks and education identified back in 1966: bad parents and peer groups. "When coke hit Baltimore in the 1980s," Edward Burns and David Simon write in *The Corner: A Year in the Life on an Inner-City Neighborhood*, "it went beyond the existing addict population, gathering a new market share, for the first time bringing the women to the corner in startling numbers." This introduced a new dynamic: Because women too were using cocaine, the drug's subculture, combined with all the other familiar inner-city blights, exerted tremendous sway over children.

In a way even jaded observers would find disturbing, Northern's students have suffered. For instance, their lives at home are wholly foreign to their lives in class. "They can tear up a school," Burns, a teacher at a middle school which serves Northern, says of what he calls "corner" mentality kids. "The logic of the corner does not apply in classrooms, and unfortunately these kids become very frustrated and don't do well." As if the prevalence of broken families was not bad enough, now there is a new phenomenon: families without parents. Robinson says as many as two-thirds of Northern's students either have no parents, have their own kids, or are raising siblings.

Even the student elite grow up in shockingly bad environments. In late September, Northern paid tribute to the school's starting quarterback and the previous year's valedictorian, both of whom were shot and killed not far from their homes: the quarterback, Rocco Cash, was killed in a drive-by shooting, and the valedictorian, Maishan St. Patrick Nelson, was, according to police, shot by a teenager when he made a wrong turn into a drug-infested neighborhood.

Still, Northern is not doomed, or at least it doesn't have to be. Brown will probably be fired, and that will help, school officials say; if a good principal signs on, the school could become less violent and chaotic. But reformers will have to think in grander terms. (Which is saying something: The city's schools were overhauled last spring.) They could look to the federal government, but Washington provides only seven percent of school funding. Vouchers are no panacea. Even President Clinton's school reforms would barely affect Northern. The proposal to shrink class sizes, for example, only applies to grades one through three. But loftier schemes are not on the table; nobody is talking about Northern anymore. •

A plan to reform auto insurance.

NO FAULT, NO FOUL

By Peter H. Schuck

A new report indicates that auto insurance premiums, after tripling in the last two decades, are beginning to stabilize and even drop in some areas. But, before consumers break out the champagne, they should consider recent trends. The average annual insurance bill is $700 per car—and the median family owns two cars. Low-income drivers who need a car to get to work must choose between buying insurance and buying family necessities—so in some areas, 90 percent choose to drive without insurance. If an insured driver collides with an uninsured driver, the insured one can only recover damages by claiming under his own, increasingly costly, "uninsured motorist" coverage. The victim of an insured driver can only recover if his injurer was negligent, and, even then, his recovery may be very low since states mandate only minimal coverage (just $25,000 in New York, a high-limit state). And, if the insurer rejects the claim, victims must enter a grueling tort system with long delays, high legal fees, and uncertain outcomes.

But, for the first time in recent memory, automobile insurance—long relegated to state regulators—may receive serious attention in Congress. Last year, when New Jersey's otherwise popular governor, Christine Todd Whitman, nearly lost to a political unknown who demanded a mandatory auto insurance rate rollback, Washington took notice. Now, bipartisan support has emerged behind a proposal called "Auto Choice" that could reduce auto insurance rates for many drivers—if, of course, the trial lawyers and their Naderite allies don't kill it.

The focus of the proposal is the notorious "pain and suffering" awards that juries routinely assess in personal injury cases. Because juries can usually award as much as they like, pain-and-suffering awards generally account for at least half the money that tort defendants pay, which drives insurance rates higher. To advocates of the status quo, pain-and-suffering awards allow juries to deter and condemn wrongful driving while compensating victims' intangible losses and defraying their lawyers' fees. Critics counter that these awards make the tort system arbitrary, costly, and prone to fraud; their unpredictability also discourages settlements.

This is an old debate. How to compensate injuries without encouraging drivers to inflict more of them has bedeviled policymakers since 1932, when the first systematic study of the problem was published. It found, as

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did later studies, that the tort system was slow to pay victims, overpaid small claims, left the most seriously injured inadequately compensated, and inflated insurance rates.

Beginning with Massachusetts in 1970, many states turned to no-fault laws for relief. Modeled on century-old workers-compensation laws, no-fault aims to give all but the most seriously injured motorists a swift, sure recovery of their economic losses in exchange for limiting the pain-and-suffering awards that fuel tort litigation and drive up insurance rates. Claimants (other than drunk drivers and other serious violators) automatically recover most or all of their economic losses from their own ("first party") insurer rather than having to prove to a court or another driver's ("third party") insurer that the other party was at fault. Unfortunately, the tort system's defenders—led by the trial lawyers—raised serious concerns about no-fault by exploiting populist images of jury trial, mangled victims, industry callousness, and irresponsible drivers. Some states did eventually enact plans that provided first-party benefits while barring tort claims below a certain damage threshold. But, although states like New York and Michigan, with their generous first-party benefits and high tort thresholds, managed to reduce auto litigation and keep insurance rates relatively stable, most no-fault states made matters worse by combining no-fault with very low tort thresholds. The no-fault boom ended in the 1970s, when national legislation failed. Since then, California voters have decisively rejected several no-fault proposals, while some no-fault states have actually repealed their laws.

But now a more attractive no-fault alternative has emerged. Devised by law professor Jeffrey O'Connell, the father of no-fault, and policy gadfly Michael Horowitz, Auto Choice would give drivers two options: They could buy "tort maintenance coverage" (TMC), retaining their existing right to sue for pain and suffering, or they could buy "personal-protection insurance" (PPI), which would cost less but would cover only their economic losses, such as car repairs, lost wages, and hospital bills. Thus, if two PPI drivers collided, each could recover from his own insurer only his economic loss. If two TMC drivers collided, they could litigate just as they could now. If a PPI driver collided with a TMC driver, the PPI driver could collect no-fault benefits from his own PPI insurer; the TMC driver could sue his own TMC insurer, based on the other driver's fault, for both economic losses and pain and suffering, up to whatever policy limits he had purchased. If his economic loss exceeded his policy limits, he could sue the PPI driver for the excess.

Though complex, a plan like this has political appeal. If consumers can choose among competing car models at different prices, why not different types of insurance? A new Joint Economic Committee study of Auto Choice estimates savings to drivers of over $35 billion each year—$184 per car. Low-income drivers and urban states would benefit the most, and additional savings might come from less duplicate coverage and fewer incentives to pad doctor and repair bills. Payment would be speedier.

Whether these savings would actually materialize, however, depends on several contingencies. How many drivers would choose PPI, and how many would be high-risk drivers, raising the accident rate? How many accidents would involve PPI and TMC drivers? How would claims by nonmotorists be handled? How much would TMC drivers pay for first-party pain-and-suffering coverage? Nobody really knows the answers, which will depend on the plan's benefit structure, optional coverages and deductibles, and drivers' predictions about whether they will be injurers or victims, at fault or faultless, seriously hurt or only property-damaged.

Skeptics point to Quebec, where, according to an early study, accident and death rates rose after the province adopted no-fault and allowed only modest (by American standards) pain-and-suffering benefits in some cases. The skeptics predict that, in the U.S., cheaper PPI and easier no-fault recoveries will cause "adverse selection," encouraging more dangerous driving (especially among price-sensitive, risky youths) and increasing safe drivers' premiums. But Quebec initially used uniform rates; only later did it charge riskier drivers more, as states could and should under Auto Choice. A recent analysis suggests that the later Quebec plan may actually have reduced accidents.

Auto Choice, of course, may look rather different once the trial lawyers work it over. Senators Joseph Lieberman and Daniel Patrick Moynihan support the plan, but other Democrats—and the president—may be reluctant to oppose the trial lawyers. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports Auto Choice, but, with the notable exceptions of State Farm and USAA, the insurance industry will probably not endorse it; its premium revenue would fall, although it might also attract now-uninsured drivers into the market. The GOP, ideologically committed to consumer choice, should welcome reform; Senator Mitch McConnell and House Majority Leader Dick Armey are sponsors. But some Republicans will insist that auto insurance is best left to the states.

Anticipating this objection, the bill allows any state to opt out of or modify the plan. But, since states can *already* adopt choice if they wish, the bill's defeat in Congress would not foreclose state enactment. Some changes are worth trying. States could allow more seriously injured drivers to sue for pain and suffering (though this would limit the potential premium reductions). Pain-and-suffering awards could be made more predictable. Rigorous data-gathering could detect whether a choice plan increases accidents. The choice strategy is a pastiche of tradeoffs, not a policy panacea. The crucial question is whether it is a better tradeoff than the status quo. We won't know the answer until a few states try it.

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GOLD DIGGERS

By Ryan Lizza

In February, after a year of negotiations, the Department of the Interior and Senator Dianne Feinstein of California proudly announced the details of a conservation plan to protect 7,500 acres of northern Californian redwoods from the chainsaws of Texas financier and Pacific Lumber owner Charles Hurwitz. In accordance with a deal hurriedly brokered two months before Bill Clinton's reelection, the federal and state governments are paying Hurwitz $380 million to acquire the land, which includes the 4,500-acre Headwaters Grove, the largest stand of ancient redwoods left in private hands. Feinstein and Interior Department officials congratulated themselves on their great victory for environmentalism. "It's a win-win agreement for everyone," Feinstein declared. But it was Hurwitz who had reason to gloat. The most prized part of the land, the Headwaters Grove, had been valued at about $20 million, and it would have been illegal to cut the trees down anyway.

Hurwitz is obviously a clever man, but he's not the only one who understands how the system works. Indeed, the Headwaters purchase is merely the most prominent example of an age-old, but increasingly common, method of undermining land-use regulations: threatening to defile land unless the government buys it. Does your property border a national park? Mine it. Pesky endangered species living in your trees? Log them. Landowners have found that both environmental groups and the government take the threats seriously and will pay big bucks to save the land—often more than the owner could have received by developing the property or selling it on the private market. Last year, Congress appropriated hundreds of millions of dollars to fund such purchases. Now, from northern California to the Okefenokee Swamp, small-time land speculators and Fortune 500 corporations alike are cashing in. Environmentalists call this "environmental extortion."

Before Charles Hurwitz acquired Pacific Lumber in a hostile takeover financed by junk bonds in 1985, the 130-year-old company's practices were a model of sustainable forestry. That all changed when Hurwitz's company purchased it. Hurwitz's company had accumulated $750 million in debt and then, two years later, a Texas savings and loan he allegedly controlled collapsed (leaving taxpayers with a $1.6 billion cleanup bill). Back in Humboldt County, California, Hurwitz started squeezing Pacific Lumber for every penny it had. He doubled the rate of logging, and it became clear that he planned to harvest trees in the heart of the Headwaters Grove—trees worth more than $100,000 a piece as timber. But after a public outcry—over the logging's impact on endangered species like the marbled murrelet, a seabird that nests atop the centuries-old redwoods—a string of government agency and court rulings based on the Endangered Species Act blocked the logging.

Hurwitz didn't give up, however. In 1996, after a decade of protests, lawsuits, and failed negotiations, he launched a three-pronged attack to force a buyout. Pacific Lumber sued the government, claiming that, because regulations had effectively turned its forest into a wildlife preserve, the regulations constituted an illegal taking of its property. Next, Pacific Lumber announced that it would begin salvage logging in Headwaters—a process of harvesting dead and diseased redwoods that the courts condone but environmentalists loathe.

Finally, at the same time it was preparing for salvage logging and proceeding with its takings suit, Pacific Lumber hired a Sacramento public relations firm to create the Headwaters Consensus Council, which billed itself as an environmental coalition urging the public to "Save Old Growth Redwoods Now!" The council distributed literature calling the grove an "irreplaceable treasure" that was "at risk" because Pacific Lumber "cannot be expected to preserve [it]." The group tried to stir the public into demanding that the government buy Headwaters. The suggested price? Five hundred million dollars.

It was a brilliant move. That fall, thousands of fleece-clad environmentalists descended upon Pacific Lumber, demanding protection for Headwaters. In Washington, Hurwitz had hired über-lobbyist Tommy Boggs to negotiate with the Department of the Interior. By late September, the government had agreed to "save" Headwaters and several other groves in a $380 million deal. The salvage logging was called off, and Pacific Lumber suspended its lawsuit.

Senator Feinstein, who led the negotiations, defends the purchase as a necessary alternative to fighting Hurwitz's takings lawsuit, which she claims risked a ruling that could jeopardize the Endangered Species Act itself. As for the hefty price tag, both Pacific Lumber

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and Feinstein contend that it makes sense given a 1993 appraisal that values the timber in the 4,500-acre Headwaters Grove at $500 million.

But legal experts dispute Feinstein's claim that Hurwitz's suit threatened the Endangered Species Act. Legal precedents were on the government's side, and takings suits are routinely fought and won by the government. The value of the forest, meanwhile, is an even more contentious issue. Hurwitz paid just $900 million for all 200,000 acres of Pacific Lumber's property in the '80s. According to an appraisal the Justice Department commissioned in 1996—specifically to guide negotiations with Hurwitz—the timber in the grove is worth only $20 million because of environmental restrictions. Even without the environmental restrictions, the report concludes that it's worth just $250 million.

Money for land purchases like these comes from a 30-year-old program called the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is financed by royalties from offshore oil and gas leases. Last year, the fund contained nearly $700 million. But the bulk of that will go to the federal government's share of the Headwaters purchase ($250 million) and one other land deal: $65 million to prevent gold mining just outside Yellowstone. (A Canadian firm, Crown Butte, was going to develop it.)

The expensive deals have raised the ire of at least a few public officials and environmentalists. For example, Paul Zimmerman, a Forest Service official in charge of buying federal land for five western states, says deals like Headwaters, in his opinion, are draining the scarce supply of dollars for public lands. "The high profile ones take away from having a coherent land acquisition plan," he says. Even with $700 million, he says, he couldn't get approval to purchase his highest priority, 3,000 acres of land, including the longest dinosaur trackway in North America, for just $400,000.

But, for the most part, environmentalists don't complain about the land purchases. The LWCF, after all, is a big pot of money for helping the environment, and environmentalists don't want to jeopardize it—even if that means tolerating its inefficient use. The Sierra Club, for example, is condemning the Headwaters deal based on what it feels is a poor overall conservation plan. "We don't make [the price] a primary focus for us," says Sierra Club representative Elyssa Rosen. A spokesperson for the Wilderness Society explains that, even when it knows too much is being paid, it tends "to keep [its] mouth shut." And a representative from the National Association of Home Builders confides that "there are a lot of developers working with environmentalists."

Indeed there are. One example is Tom Chapman, a Colorado real estate developer, who in 1992 bought an inholding—an island of private property surrounded by federal land—within the breathtaking West Elk Wilderness. He knew the Forest Service wanted it preserved, so, according to press accounts, he rather conspicuously helicoptered construction workers and building materials to the land and had them start work on what he claimed would be six log-cabin-style mansions. "The Forest Service should rename the thing," he told a reporter, "because it will no longer be a wilderness." Eventually, he agreed to halt the development and give up the inholding—in exchange for other federal lands. Facing pressure from local environmentalists, the Forest Service yielded and swapped him real estate in Telluride, Colorado, which he then sold for a 600 percent profit. Chapman has made millions of dollars in other land swaps with the government over the last decade.

"I don't think [Charles Hurwitz] was any different than I am," boasts Mike Mitchell, a brash 35-year-old entrepreneur from Seattle who has made himself into a millionaire in less than five years by purchasing land coveted by the Forest Service or preservation groups and selling it to them for a profit. "One of the things people bitch about," he says, "is that when [I] get land [I] threaten to mine it or develop it." Those threats, Mitchell says, are exactly what justifies the higher prices he demands. "What I do is try to get the appraisal value up," he says. "That's all I'm trying to do." Mitchell sees himself as a conservation profiteer whose tactics are more effective than those of the environmentalists with whom he competes and whom he mocks relentlessly. "The environmental groups ... think that I'm holding them hostage or doing 'greenmail,'" he complains. "I don't have time to breast-feed insecure personalities. How many acres of land did they save last year?"

More cases loom. In February of last year, just five months after President Clinton established the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in Utah, Conoco announced plans to drill for oil within the area. After the Interior Department rejected Conoco's offer to give up on the highly speculative exploration in exchange for more valuable offshore leases, Conoco dragged in heavy equipment and started drilling, infuriating local environmentalists. In another case, DuPont Co. is plowing ahead with plans to mine titanium on 38,000 acres of land bordering the pristine Okefenokee Swamp on the Georgia-Florida border while making it clear that the organization would accept other government assets in exchange for abandoning the project. And, in Washington, two brothers have asked for $10 million to give up the rights to mine gold on a stretch of unspoiled coastline in Olympic National Park.

While politicians take credit for finally saving Headwaters, and groups like the Sierra Club complain about the conservation plan agreed to by Feinstein and the Interior Department, Hurwitz may be plotting a second deal. Pacific Lumber is now training its chainsaws on a 1,000-acre grove of old-growth redwoods outside of Headwaters. But Hurwitz, ever the altruist, has reportedly suggested that he would give up the grove—just so long as the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation drops its substantial claim against him related to his role in the savings and loan failure. Fortunately for him, environmentalists have already planned lawsuits and protests to save the grove. •

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The answer to global warming.

HOT AND NOT BOTHERED

By Gregg Easterbrook

Let's assume for a moment that all the clamor over global warming is warranted: that burning fossil fuels to generate artificial greenhouse gases will change Earth's climate with disastrous consequences. Then shouldn't priority number one be to reduce such gases? Not necessarily. If global warming theory really is right, climate change will arrive before even the most ambitious reforms could counter the buildup of greenhouse gases. This makes the immediate priority *adaptation*—preparing to cope with climate change. Yet the subject of adapting to a warmer world is taboo in the greenhouse debate. Not only is nobody funding adaptation studies, few people in either government or the environmental movement want to discuss them.

This is not to say that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions don't have merit. Take the Kyoto greenhouse gas treaty, hammered out last December in Japan and now awaiting submission to the U.S. Senate. If ratified, the treaty will oblige the United States, by 2012, to reduce greenhouse emissions to a level seven percent lower than that which was reached in 1990—a goal that effectively requires the United States to cut its output of global warming gases by one-third from what it might otherwise have emitted during that period. Similar cuts would be required by other Western nations. The Kyoto treaty should be ratified because all it asks for is realistic progress that can be achieved by improvements in energy efficiency. And nearly all experts agree that U.S. energy efficiency can be improved with little or no harm to the economy: the United States economy's energy intensity—that is, the amount of energy consumption per dollar of economic production—has already declined by 23 percent from 1987 to 1997, a period of banner economic growth. New energy-efficiency initiatives should lead to breakthroughs in technical areas where progress is needed no matter what climate trends are, such as improving the gasoline mileage of those ponderous four-wheel drives and "utes" currently so popular. Kyoto requirements will also spur the research that makes possible the inevitable—and quite desirable—post-petroleum energy economy. Studies suggest that world oil production may peak and begin to decline as early as the second decade of the coming century; thus, preparing for the transition to alternate fuels would be in society's interest regardless of environmental considerations.

But, even if the Kyoto treaty is a fantastic success, global warming will continue to become more likely. Developing nations, which are not regulated by Kyoto, will increase their output of greenhouse gases more rapidly than industrialized nations will reduce theirs. Here are the numbers. Today the world net output of artificial carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas, is about six billion tons per year. The United States, under Kyoto, would cut greenhouse gas emissions by 400 million tons per year by 2012. During the same period, Chinese production of greenhouse gases is expected to rise by almost two billion tons annually. At current rates of growth, it will be only 15 years until China, which now burns about 800,000 barrels of oil daily, matches the current U.S. consumption rate of 8.4 million barrels daily, leading to a tenfold increase in Chinese greenhouse gas emissions from oil. The net result: Global greenhouse emissions in the year 2015 will be around nine billion tons per year, 50 percent higher than today's level.

Because carbon dioxide accumulates in the atmosphere for several decades before natural processes remove it, continued higher global emissions means an ever-higher carbon dioxide concentration. When the industrial era began, the atmosphere was about 270 parts-per-million carbon dioxide. Today it's about 360 parts-per-million, with a rise to at least 450 parts-per-million seemingly inevitable based on current trends. Even in a best-case scenario, the Kyoto treaty will restrain this buildup by only about five parts-per-million, just one percent of the current atmospheric level. Many projections suggest that, even with improvements in energy efficiency, world economic and population growth could push the leading greenhouse gas indicator toward 550 parts-per-million by the end of the coming century—double the preindustrial level. As environmental writer Bill McKibben has noted, 20 years ago, when greenhouse effect theory was being composed, *doubling* of the air's carbon dioxide level was spoken of

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by activists as a nightmare scenario. Now, doubling is an optimistic scenario because buildup may not stop there.

Looking at such figures, orthodox environmentalists call for a crash program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some have proposed that Western countries immediately cut their emissions by 50 percent or more. But, unlike the feasible and moderate Kyoto treaty, a crash program against greenhouse emissions would almost certainly cause a recession, since it would require car-use bans, energy rationing, and similar strictures.

For their part, conservatives look at the same Kyoto figures and declare that, since greenhouse emissions will continue despite regulation, there's no point in having a treaty at all. This approach is just as misguided as the calls for a crash anti-emissions program. No one, especially conservatives, would argue that, since there will always be criminals, there's no point in taking steps to reduce crime. Similarly, just because overall world carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise doesn't mean it's not desirable to reduce their rate of increase.

What we should really conclude from the inevitability of continued greenhouse gas buildup is that, if global warming theory is right, a warming world is now simply unavoidable—at least through the next century or so, until a renewable-fuels energy economy can be realized.

And how credible is the theory? So far, greenhouse gas emissions have not caused temperatures to increase as much as scientists and their computer models predicted. Over the course of the twentieth century, the mean global temperature has risen only about one degree Fahrenheit—not a number worth losing any sleep over. But carbon dioxide levels continue to rise. And, ironically, progress against other forms of pollution may actually accelerate global warming. For instance, acid rain and chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) use both had the zany side effect of reducing global temperatures because acid rain droplets increase the atmosphere's "albedo," or ability to reflect sunlight back into space, and ozone layer thinning (essentially) tends to reduce heat trapping in the stratosphere. Now that most nations are rapidly controlling both types of pollution, greenhouse effects may increase. And, in the last few years, the scientific consensus on global warming has strengthened. Projections now call for a twenty-first-century warming of two to five degrees Fahrenheit, which could be anything from annoying to quite nasty. Unless there is some basic flaw in global warming theory, some coming temperature increases appear cast in stone.

Yet, astonishingly, there is barely any discussion about how to prepare for this likely transformation. Adaptation was a verboten topic at the Kyoto conference. "No one is funding adaptation studies, no one in politics wants to discuss it, and the environmental lobby gets very upset if you bring this up," says Jesse Ausubel, head of the environment program at Rockefeller University in New York. Though the federal government now spends more than $1.5 billion a year to study the possibility that temperatures will rise, there is no major federal initiative to study adaptive response. Many environmentalists consider the mere mention of adaptation heretical because it implies that humanity can overcome global warming rather than be overcome by it, thus shifting the emphasis away from green guilt.

So far the only prominent attempt to raise the issue of greenhouse adaptation was made by the National Academy of Sciences, which released a 1991 report titled *Policy Implications of Greenhouse Warming*. This study had many progressive qualities, including its central contention that significant greenhouse gas reductions could be achieved for a price equivalent to just eleven cents per gallon of gasoline, an affordable and politically feasible cost. (A 1997 Pew Research Center poll found that a majority of Americans say they would pay an additional 25 cents per gallon for lower greenhouse emissions.) But the report also included a chapter describing steps for adapting to a warming world, and for this it was widely ridiculed by editorialists and enviros.

This is a shame since the report explored some vital issues. For example, it cautioned that agricultural adaptation will be essential in a warming world. Global food output has been rising faster than population for almost a generation—in this respect, the mild temperature increase of this century may have been a net boon to humanity. But, if temperatures rise much higher (especially the summer afternoon highs that scorch crops), or if new rainfall patterns shift precipitation away from currently productive regions into areas that are now forest or desert (precipitation patterns have already shifted a bit in the United States in this decade, with climate change a likely cause), agriculture could be damaged during the very generation that global food needs reach an all-time high.

Orthodox enviros see this as a reason to panic; the National Academy saw it as a reason to fund research into crop strains that tolerate a broader range of temperature and moisture supply. But, though some plant breeders have long worked on this question, there is no major coordinated federal initiative to develop greenhouse-resistant crops or, for that matter, to seek greenhouse-exploiting plants that would take advantage of increased carbon dioxide in the air. The National Academy's recommendation that such research be funded because "experience suggests that farmers adapt quickly" was among the most-ridiculed aspects of the report, owing to the impermissibly hopeful note it struck. One member of the study panel, Jessica Tuchman Mathews, now head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a longtime

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fount of doomsday clichés, issued a dissent attacking the report for its lack of pleasingly dismal conclusions.

The National Academy report also suggested that the government conduct research into "geoengineering," or physical techniques to counter an artificial greenhouse effect. So far the main geoengineering proposals are to have aircraft scatter reflective particles into the upper atmosphere, to increase the amount of sunlight that bounces back into space, or to load the oceans with nutrients that encourage the growth of those marine organisms that metabolize carbon dioxide. (The natural carbon cycle is dominated by ocean chemistry.)

These ideas do have a mad scientist flavor, and they are handicapped by the fact that a current leading proponent of geoengineering, Edward Teller of H-bomb fame, is considered by some to be an actual mad scientist. But, if global warming really is "the most serious problem that we have ever faced," as Vice President Al Gore wrote in *Earth in the Balance*, shouldn't scientists be investigating any short-term fix that might keep the planet stable until the long-term solution of clean energy can become practical?

Clean machines

The Kyoto treaty on global warming calls upon the United States to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by seven percent in just over ten years' time. While this seven percent reduction may seem daunting, a host of initiatives are already under way that could get the U.S. most of the way toward compliance.

One such effort is the campaign to create more fuel-efficient automobiles. Last fall, the Department of Energy, the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and Arthur D. Little Co. announced they had developed a fuel processor capable of extracting hydrogen from gasoline. This technology could allow efficient conversion of gasoline and other fuels to electricity, opening the way for a new generation of fuel-efficient, electrically driven motor vehicles that might be available for mass markets within a decade. The finding is an outgrowth of the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles, a Clinton administration initiative to develop automobiles that meet new environmental standards and improve mileage threefold.

U.S. innovators could also borrow from the Japanese. During the Kyoto conference, Toyota started selling the Prius—a hybrid vehicle that can switch back and forth between a gasoline-powered engine and an electric motor. When the car brakes, the wheels power a generator that, in turn, produces electricity stored in a battery for subsequent use. When the car is stationary, the engine shuts off, preserving fuel. Although electric cars have long been considered too expensive for widespread use, Toyota is offering Prius on the Japanese market for just $16,929—not too shabby, particularly given the mileage: 66 miles per gallon. Toyota believes hybrids like Prius could account for as much as one-third of the world auto market by 2005.

Another promising avenue for reducing emissions is more efficient production of electricity. Right now, power plants release about one-third of the energy they produce as waste heat—energy that could heat buildings and provide hot water. It is already possible to capture this heat with the right technology. And the technology is widely available for the right price.

Of course, making the price right means changing the current financial incentives, which discourage firms from changing their energy-consumption habits. But this is hardly impossible. While the most straightforward solution—a tax on carbon—is politically impossible (or at least deemed so by most political professionals), a system of tradable pollution permits could also do the trick.

The Clinton administration has proposed letting the government set a limit on emissions over the next several years (say, to an annual average of one billion tons of carbon) and then allocate permits to fossil fuel producers in proportion to their average consumption over the past several years. Firms would then be free to trade these permits: an oil company looking to increase its sales could purchase emission rights from a coal producer. A utility needing coal to fuel its coal-fired boilers would have to pay a premium. Overall, investing in cleaner-burning fuels would become more attractive financially—and, although the economic impact would be about the same, it would be more politically viable than a straightforward tax.

Conceivably, this approach could also work in an international context—in other words, countries could agree to issue permits and then allow firms or individuals to trade the permits across national borders. But this would add complications as well. Consider, for example, a country like Russia. Its emissions are already well below the 1990 level the Kyoto treaty set as the standard. In a system of globally traded permits, Russia could probably afford to sell its permits without actually decreasing its pollution further. Meanwhile, a relatively wealthy nation like the U.S. could probably purchase Russia's permits and, in so doing, avoid having to reduce its emissions. The total amount of pollution in the world would thus remain unchanged. This is why a system of globally traded permits could only work *after* countries had reached a more equal footing when it comes to pollution.

Getting there would involve, first, reaching the emissions levels set by the Kyoto treaty. It would also involve enlisting developing nations in the global atmospheric cleanup—a goal that eluded the architects of Kyoto and will likely frustrate future negotiators as well. China, for example, stands to soon surpass the U.S. as the world's leading producer of carbon dioxide and is heavily dependent on coal. It will take intense diplomatic pressure, and substantial investment from abroad, for China to break its coal habit.

But, again, this result will advance U.S. self-interest, and not just because pollution from Asia affects the entire world. China will have to buy its renewable energy resources and technology from somebody—why shouldn't that somebody be the U.S.? Contrary to what Kyoto's critics say, it's easy being green after all.

MICHAEL B. MCELROY

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Another area in which society should focus its adaptive energies, assuming global warming theory is right, is disease control. Hollywood and the book industry have fixated on the small chance that some genetic shift will cause a weird runaway pandemic. (Notwithstanding serious works like *The Coming Plague* and silly movie proposals masquerading as books like *The Hot Zone*, life expectancies continue to rise almost everywhere in the world.) A more likely twenty-first-century problem, as the World Health Organization has warned, is that rising temperatures will gradually increase the range of existing disease vectors such as the anopheles mosquito, allowing what are now equatorial scourges to infect a larger portion of the world.

To prevent this from happening, nations need to focus on techniques that can reduce the incidence of such infections. Paramount among these are measures to improve the safety of the developing world's water supply. Almost a billion people in the developing world currently lack access to safe drinking water; probably twice as many live in cities without adequate water sanitation. These two factors spread far more disease than any Ebola monkey—some four million developing-world children die each year from waterborne disease (a number nearly double that of all deaths from all causes at all ages in the United States). Developing nations clearly need big, high-tech water treatment projects—filtration plants, wastewater plants, sewers, and reservoirs that will marshal agricultural water for possible dry years caused by global warming.

Unfortunately, because environmental fund-raisers cling to the crunchy-granola pretense that the developing world should use only "appropriate" technology like water jars, the importance of waterworks investments is rarely discussed. At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, for instance, the issue of potable water received barely any attention amidst all the fashionable angst about carbon emissions. To be sure, former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator William Reilly recently began a project to find private sector sources of money for developing-world water sanitation systems. But the fact that this must be done privately merely underscores the Western governments' lack of interest.

Other possible adaptation strategies generate equal disdain from the environmentally orthodox. Take the need to plant more trees. Growing trees absorb significant amounts of carbon dioxide from the air: one reason global temperatures have not increased as expected in the postwar era may be that the forested portion of the Western world has grown during that time, and the young trees are sucking up beaucoup carbon dioxide. This little fact can drive environmental lobbies to distraction. It implies that logging, which replaces mature trees with growing stands that require more carbon dioxide, has a positive global effect to offset its local negatives. And it implies that cross-breeding tree species and "managing" forests for rapid growth, and thus rapid carbon dioxide absorption, is beneficial to the environment, rather than a diabolical corporate plot.

Of course, the equation does not always work in favor of young trees. Chainsaw types who say that the world would be better off if old-growth stands were replaced by young carbon-loving woods overlook studies showing that some logging techniques disturb soils in ways that release more carbon than the new trees absorb. But studies suggest that removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by "sequestering" it in growing trees costs only $10 to $20 per ton of pollutant, which is quite cost-effective compared to some regulatory proposals to cut greenhouse emissions. Overall, any sensible program of adaptation would strongly encourage tree planting and support the substitution of many fossil-derived materials with products based on endlessly renewable, carbon-friendly wood. Too bad environmentalism, and conventional wisdom, are too wrapped up in trendy anti-logger sentiment to recognize this.

Any serious approach to greenhouse adaptation also ought to include more research into new energy forms. "Since the greenhouse problem is long-term, the R and D is more important now than short-term emissions policy," notes Robert Socolow, head of Princeton University's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies. President Clinton has proposed about $1 billion a year in tax preferences for renewable energy research, a welcome number but one that pales in comparison to the nearly $200 billion annually that government and industry spend for all research and development. Affordable solar converters, cars powered by zero-emission fuel cells, new "inherently safe" nuclear reactors that make electricity without any air pollutants, and other clean-power technologies are close to practicality. Anything the government can do to kick such ideas out of the laboratory and into the marketplace, where buyers could seek low-greenhouse energy voluntarily, might have more effect on global warming trends than all emission regulations combined.

Not so far into the future, there may even be fossil power techniques that eliminate greenhouse buildup—something that was described as impossible as recently as a decade ago. Ausubel of Rockefeller University, a hot theorist in the emerging field of "industrial ecology," is one of several who have proposed that natural-gas-fired electric generating stations be redesigned so that they pipe carbon dioxide by-products directly into the ocean, mimicking the natural carbon cycle. So far there is no move to fund the study of such facilities, partly because environmental lobbies pressure against any research that would render fossil fuel use ecologically benign.

In short, if greenhouse theory is right, a warmer twenty-first century is foreordained. This isn't necessarily cause for a disaster alarm: The arrival of clean energy should eventually moderate whatever greenhouse problems occur, and a mildly warmer world could even have its advantages, for instance by opening vast areas of the former Soviet Union to agriculture. But the advantages will exceed the problems only if we prepare for the inevitable. It's time to drop the taboo, and start learning to live with the heat. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Leaning on the Past

Time machines come in different models, cinematically speaking. **Marius and Jeannette** (New Yorker) is the latest alluring example of one model. This new French film transports us easily and surely back to the world of old French film. Though the setting is France today, within a very few minutes we are once again in the air of the mid-1930s.

In those days a good portion of French films, moving and memorable, were odes to the working class. Renoir's *The Crime of Monsieur Lange* and *La Vie est à nous*, Duvivier's *La Belle Equipe* warmed us with sympathy for those who had been neglected or misrepresented in films, showed us the basic heroism and hope in the oppressed, filled us with monolithic hate for those who had oppressed them. In a time when unemployment scarred every country we knew, when help seemed torturously slow in coming, films like those three (there were many others) made us tingle with compassion, with solidarity. For 90 or 100 minutes at least, we felt that values were clear and that light would eventually destroy shadows.

Now, with considerable daring, with utter dismissal of everything worldly that has been learned in the last 60 years, with complete subscription to the beliefs and rhetoric of the 1930s, Robert Guédiguian presents his seventh feature. (It's his first to be released here). He says that Frank Capra is his cinematic hero, and in a few syrupy ways that is evident; but his real ideals are the 60-year-old, proletarian French films that he quite apparently knows.

The setting of *Marius and Jeannette* is working-class Marseilles. (Note that the lover in Pagnol's Marseilles trilogy, made in the 1930s, was called Marius.) This Marius, about 40, is a guard at a demolition job on a huge cement plant. Jeannette, about 40, is a single mother raising two children near by. The man and the woman become acquainted, begin an affair, and when love deepens between them, Marius absents himself. The reason, as we learn and as we suspected, is a previous experience that left him hurt and wary; but in time this trouble is addressed.

Jeannette is a scorcher, a fighter against her bossy boss at a supermarket, a vociferous supporter of the working class, a hater of the privileged and wealthy. The apartment where she lives with her teenage daughter and younger son (the boy had an African father) is in a set of small old buildings around a courtyard. In these buildings are all the small cast of principals, all of whom are either working-class or sympathetic to it.

They include a laborer who once voted for the Far Right and whose wife won't let him forget it; a retired schoolteacher who philosophically sees through social fallacies; a mature woman whose Communist beliefs took her to a German concentration camp; a few others. They all have lots of communal *bonhomie* under their squabbles; and when the Marius-Jeannette romance falters, the workman and the teacher take neighborly steps to revive it.

Those steps, involving drinks and a bar fight, are only part of the screenplay's occasionally glaring mechanics. (It was written by Guédiguian and Jean-Louis Milesi.) Jeannette is fired from her job, for asserting her rights, early in the film: how then does she support her family? How then will her daughter go to Paris to study? This supposedly realistic film doesn't say. And why is "O Sole Mio" the "theme song" of this very French picture? Particularly as Neapolitanized by Pavarotti?

Yet, despite the fissures in the structure, despite the deceptive redolence of the past, *Marius and Jeannette* has a bit of the effect of the Pavarotti recording: at the same time that we know we're being had, the piece has some insidious emotional power. Guédiguian is a smooth enough director, but it's his casting and some episodes in the screenplay that transfix us.

Jeannette is played by Ariane Ascaride, Guédiguian's wife, who has appeared in all his films, a short vigorous woman with fire and wit and tenderness. Gérard Meylan gives Marius exactly the taciturn weight that he needs. (We're told that Meylan, who also has played in all this director's films, isn't a professional actor. He works as a nurse in a Marseilles hospital.) Pascale Roberts, still a beautiful woman, is the camp survivor and touches her long speech of remembrance with bitter truth. Laetitia Pasenti is effortlessly enchanting as Jeannette's daughter, and Jacques Boudet, who has some resemblance to Philippe Noiret, is amiable as the old teacher.

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Fireworks. *A Japanese version of an American genre—the lives of big-city detectives. An incredibly active man named Takeshi Kitano writes, directs, and stars in this, his seventh feature and his first to be shown here. (Reviewed 4/6/98)* **Primary Colors.** *Jack and Susan (not, of course, Bill and Hillary) campaigning their way to the White House. Politics continues to make strange bedfellows. Fast, sometimes funny, and depressingly believable. (4/20/98)* **Taste of Cherry.** *The Iranian master, Abbas Kiarostami, honors us with another gift. An undidactic, beautifully composed inquiry into the subject of living—why and how. (4/13/98)* **Wag the Dog.** *This time the sex is* in *the White House—and results in a huge comic maneuver to distract the public. Robert De Niro and Dustin Hoffman crackle along. (2/2/98)*—**SK**

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Guédiguian knows how to craft scenes that help the film and are almost entities in themselves. When the laborer doesn't come home one night and phones his wife, Frédérique Bonnal, to report what has happened to him, her laughter, plus that of her two neighbors, Ascaride and Roberts, is as infectious as actors' laughter ought to be and rarely is. And there's a scene between Ascaride and Pasenti that is sheer loveliness. Ascaride has bought some pretty lingerie from a peddler and gives it to her teenage daughter. When the girl puts it on, the mother looks at her with full realization of how beautiful her daughter is, how much of the past between them is gone, how much of the future will be wondrous and painful for her child. Very little is said; very much is known.

These are moments of verity—there are more—in a film that is basically a sentimentality, a saccharine rendition of class war. The final sequence shows us most of the principals walking down a road while a voice-over tells us how they will live and die and be buried with the thousands of other workers to whom this film is dedicated. Those workers know, better than Guédiguian either knows or will admit, that his film is as accurate about their lives as "O Sole Mio" is about Italy.

Recently, in a long TV interview, Jeremy Irons, intelligent and articulate, mentioned a matter of luck. He's lucky, he says: film producers like him because they think his face rather easily reflects what he is thinking. I'd add that the worse a film Irons happens to be in, the more important that asset becomes. **Chinese Box** (Trimark) doesn't disintegrate before our eyes only because Irons seems so discriminating that we keep hoping there is something *to* all this flummery.

Surprisingly enough, the original story—and "original" has rarely been so misused—was by Jean-Claude Carrière, veteran of fine French films, Paul Theroux, well-known author, and Wayne Wang, the director. (Screenplay by Carrière and Larry Gross.) All these men pooled their talents to produce one more script about a Westerner in Asia who falls in love with an Asian prostitute. Hardly a fresh idea back in 1960 when *The World of Suzie Wong* appeared.

Chinese Box is set in Hong Kong in 1997 in the six months between British and Chinese rule. A story was needed as foreground for this background, and the best that they came up with was an old soaper—this time a British journalist smitten with a high-class Chinese hooker.

Gong Li, the talented star of *The Story of Qiu Ju* and other films, is constricted in the stale role of the hooker. Wang, an overrated director in his better films, directs this trite material tritely. Irons at least seems substantial in his role and is therefore out of place. •

A discovery in the Moscow archives.

Arthur Koestler Resigns

BY MICHAEL SCAMMELL

I.

One of the more notable defections from Communism during the 1930s was that of Arthur Koestler, who resigned from the German Communist Party in 1938. Born in Hungary in 1905, Koestler had become a political activist during his student years in Vienna. In 1926 he had gone to Palestine as a supporter of Vladimir Jabotinsky's Revisionist movement, and in 1929 he had moved to Weimar Berlin, where he made his name as a science correspondent. Horrified by the rise of Hitler, Koestler secretly joined the German Communist Party, and then spent a year and a half in the Soviet Union before settling in Paris as a political exile. While working for Willi Muenzenberg's propaganda apparatus, Koestler went on three separate missions to Spain as a newspaper correspondent. On his last visit, he was captured by Franco's forces and sentenced to death, and then released after an international campaign on his behalf that was spearheaded in England.

The details of Koestler's resignation from the Communist Party appear in *The Invisible Writing* (1954), the second volume of his autobiography, where he describes it as the immediate outcome

MICHAEL SCAMMELL is writing a biography of Arthur Koestler.

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of a disastrous lecture that he delivered to the Association of Exiled German Writers in Paris. His subject was the Spanish Civil War. Koestler had by then written two books on Spain: a work of Communist propaganda called *Spanish Testament* (1937), and an autobiographical memoir, *Dialogue with Death* (1937), describing the three months that he spent in a Seville jail after being captured by Franco's forces at Málaga. He had also completed his first novel, *The Gladiators*, about Spartacus, the leader of a Roman slave rebellion in the first century AD.

At the time of his lecture, Koestler was beginning to experience doubts about several aspects of Party policy. He was particularly concerned about Spain, where the Communists had launched a violent campaign against the P.O.U.M. (Unified Marxist Workers' Party), an anti-Stalinist coalition to which Orwell had belonged for a while. Koestler felt that the Stalinists were splitting the opposition to Franco, and he refused a Party order to denounce the P.O.U.M. in his lecture. Instead, he defended the idea of cooperating with other socialist parties, declared his opposition to the idea of Party infallibility, and ended by citing Thomas Mann's heretical dictum that "in the long run, a harmful truth is better than a useful lie."

Though the Association of Exiled German Writers was nominally independent, it was dominated and virtually controlled by an active Communist caucus, whose members were in the audience. As he left the podium, Koestler could see them sitting with their arms folded, refusing to applaud. Later, when he left the hall, they studiously avoided him. He had flouted Party discipline. From that moment on, he was ostracized by his comrades.

It was while he was sitting depressed at home, waiting to hear what action the Party would take to punish him for his rebellion, that Koestler made a sudden decision to resign. Far from seeming like a logical consequence of his actions, he writes, this decision struck him at that moment as "an entirely novel and reckless idea" that filled him with a "wild elation." He worked on his letter of resignation all night, and delivered it to the Party the next day by hand. "It was, I believe, a good letter, and I am sorry I have no copy of it."

One reason that Koestler had no copy of it was that his papers from the period before 1940 were confiscated by the French police when they arrested him as an enemy alien on the eve of World War II. When he tried to recover them after the war, he was informed that the French police archives had been confiscated by the Gestapo and removed to Berlin, which was partly under Communist control. In fact, the Gestapo archives, with the French archive inside them, had been captured by the Red Army and transferred to Moscow, where they reposed in the so-called "Special Archive of the K.G.B." They were thus doubly inaccessible to Koestler, and they remained so for the rest of his life. (He committed suicide in 1983.)

In the late 1980s, I accepted a commission to write a biography of Koestler. After the collapse of Communism in 1989, when the Soviet archives began to open up, I went to Moscow to look for the lost papers. The Special Archive was by no means fully open, but I was able to get inside and to inspect most (but not, I suspect, all) of the papers that had been removed from Koestler's apartment in 1940. His letter of resignation was not there. Perhaps this meant that, in his haste to resign, the usually meticulous Koestler had failed to make a copy.

My work also took me to the archives of the Communist International (the Comintern). After several days of fruitless searching, I was handed a magical folder labeled "Arthur Koestler. Strictly Confidential." Inside the folder was the letter—or rather, not one letter of resignation, but two. These were not the originals, but painstakingly typed copies, complete with typos, crossings out, and occasional spelling mistakes. Both letters were written in Koestler's native German, and were addressed to "The Writers' Caucus of the German Communist Party."

These remarkable documents are published here for the first time.

II.

Koestler's first letter, dated April 22, 1938, is comparatively short. It reads (in my translation) as follows:

Dear Friends,

After long and thorough reflection I have decided to resign from the German Communist Party.

In a few days I will send you my detailed reasons for doing so. Meanwhile I would like to mention in advance that I am not taking this step with any hostile intent, and I am not thinking of joining any oppositional or splinter group; and that I continue, as before, to regard the existence of the Soviet Union as a decisively positive factor in the political balance of our time, and that nothing is further from my mind than to abandon this conviction. In short, I ask you to continue to regard me as an ally.

I ask you further to treat my resignation as an internal matter, that is to say, to inform only those who can be assumed to know already of my membership in the Party, and at all costs to prevent the publication of this fact in any form. My reasons for this request are as follows. When I was imprisoned in Spain, a campaign to liberate me was undertaken by liberal and conservative circles in England on the express understanding that I was not a communist. This occurred without my knowledge, of course, but with the knowledge and the blessing of the Party. If these circles were to find out after the fact, as the result of some careless publication, that I was indeed a communist, it is to be feared that a whole series of people who are important to us would have the feeling that they had been used and exploited, and would refuse to participate in such actions in the future. Much damage would be done to our movement, and to those comrades whom we still wish to rescue. I hope you will agree with me that this must be avoided at all costs.

I ask you to read this letter to our friends, and to forward it to the competent authorities.

With best regards,
A.K.

III.

Koestler's second letter was written exactly one week later. It is a bolder and more analytical document. It consists of five closely typed pages, and it was accompanied by a brief note to Egon Erwin Kisch, the caucus leader, a celebrated Czech German journalist who had acted as a kind of spiritual godfather to Koestler during the latter's first years in Paris.

This is the text of the accompanying note:

Dear Egon,

Enclosed is the promised second letter to our caucus, with the reasons for my resignation.

I ask you, personally and as a member of the caucus's leadership, to ensure that at the next meeting my letter is read aloud or circulated to caucus members. It is directed exclusively to the caucus. I believe that I am entitled to acquaint the comrades with whom I sat at meetings for so long with the reasons that have brought me to this decision.

With best regards,
Yours
A.K.

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And this is the text of the letter:

Dear Friends,

In amplification of my letter of April 22, in which I announced my resignation from the German Communist Party, I would like to try to explain to you the reasons that prompted me to take this step. I say try, because it is extraordinarily difficult to formulate, within the confines of a letter, the precise thought processes that have preoccupied and tormented me for many years.

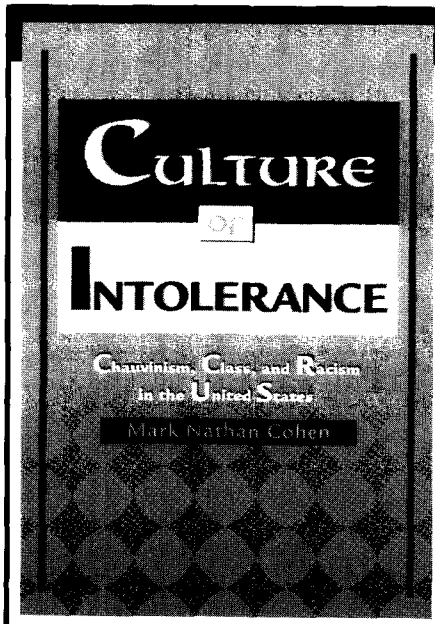
Diverging views on particular questions of political tactics would never have induced me to leave the Party. What has been decisive for me is the experience of watching the progressive moral degeneration of the Party, which began long before 1933 and has seriously affected the other sections of the [Communist] International as well. The first two general secretaries of the Comintern have been officially denounced as spies, traitors, and mad dogs, and they have been put to death. Whether this was done justly or unjustly, and according to what norms the word "just" can be applied in such cases, changes nothing about this shattering fact. I have long tried to close my eyes to the consequences of drawing logical conclusions from it. Like many of you, I sought consolation in the thought that political struggles between statesmen, who feel themselves answerable to history, have always unfolded—and necessarily so—in forms that transcend the limits of normal moral concepts. When a movement is otherwise healthy and stable, it can withstand such occurrences in its top leadership with relatively little damage.

The crucial fact, however, is that occurrences such as the Moscow trials do not appear to be isolated incidents affecting just the upper echelons of the Party. They are only the crassest and most glaring manifestation of a sickness that embraces the entire movement, a sickness that has penetrated the middle ranks of its functionaries and extends down into the individual cells.

It is the conduct of the Comintern leadership itself that leads me to this conclusion. For years now it has felt obliged to dismiss ever new groups of functionaries, and to denounce them publicly in the most violent way; it has arrested a not inconsiderable percentage of them, although their dedication to the cause is incontestable to those who know them; and it has summarily executed many of them without the benefit of proper proceedings. It is a logical contradiction when, with uncanny regularity, the leadership sees itself obliged to undertake more and more bloody operations within the movement, and in the same breath insists that the movement is healthy. Such an accumulation of grave surgical interventions points rather to the existence of a much more serious central illness.

By way of explanation, we are told that our ranks have been infiltrated by Fascist forces, that a staggering number of officials and old comrades—including some of the most trusted and dedicated among them—have been tainted by Fascist ideas, that they have sold themselves to the German, Polish, Hungarian, and Italian police. One hears this so often that one is deadened by it. One is so used to taking the transformation of old revolutionaries into stool pigeons for an everyday occurrence that one no longer notices what a moral and psychological monstrosity is represented by each single case. If you reread the history of the revolutionary movement, you will find that there have always been such terrible cases, but they were isolated instances that created a sensation. The mass corruption and abdication of an entire cadre along the lines insisted upon by our centralists has no precedent in history.

Every member of the Party is today confronted with a dilemma. Either he refuses to accept the mass-produced and monstrous accusations that are hurled against yesterday's comrades and leaders,



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in which case his days in the Party are numbered, or he believes them, he ponders them, and he runs into the problem of how the movement, both in the countries in which it is still engaged in struggle and in those in which it has already conquered, could be so extraordinarily vulnerable to this epidemic. If the Trotskyite-Nazi conspiracy, which is gradually beginning to occupy for us the role that the Elders of Zion occupy in the minds of Nazis, could have found such strong support among the top cadres of our movement, how great must have been their dissatisfaction, and how deep their doubts, for them to throw themselves into such arms!

And how does it look to the masses in the Party cells? The sense of fraternal uplift, the brotherhood of resistance, has been systematically eroded by the training in spy mania and the cultivation of denunciation-psychosis. What has happened to the great communal comradeship of yore, where has it gone? Who now trusts his neighbor? Tomorrow our neighbor is likely to be unmasked, exposed to contempt, turned into a leper. We crave and we thirst for the sense of true solidarity that alone made the times bearable, but that is now constantly undermined by hypocrisy, "vigilance," and mistrust. We sit around in small groups playing *The Man Who Was Thursday* [the novel by G.K. Chesterton, about a group of English Anarchists that is infiltrated by police agents]. We balance on the Party line as on a tightrope: a false step left or right and we are done in.

See what have they done to us! Who can still make out the goal? For years we have been wading knee-deep through a swamp: bitten, browbeaten, covered with filth, blind to reality. They console us by saying that this is the fate of all émigrés. But it was like that in Germany already. And worst of all, it is like that at the front—in Spain. The stink reaches all the way to the front lines, and even with a bullet in his belly a man is not free of the despicable clutches of this inquisition. You know the cases that I have in mind. They are more ghastly than even the most rabid Comintern-haters could have invented.

I can go no farther. Every single one of us knows of at least one case of glaring injustice within his immediate circle. Every single one of us knows of at least one victim who was innocently condemned in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. Who is prepared to open his mouth, who dares to protest and to intercede for his comrades? We remain silent, at worst out of cowardice, at best in the interest of some superior morality, of some unscrupulously distorted dialectic, and so we turn ourselves into passive accomplices of each new piece of villainy. This dialectic is inserted into us like a screw that squeezes every stirring of conscience out of our heads and our hearts. After a few years one is bled spiritually dry. The brain is withered and the conscience is atrophied. Just look around you and see what human wrecks are running around in the Party.

It has become fashionable to complain about bureaucrats and bigwigs, using them as an excuse to ventilate our accumulated bitterness. It would be better to ask how it is that inspired revolutionaries can be regularly transformed in just a few years into bureaucrats of the sort that rule the roost among us. Do you believe that a Beimler was born a bureaucrat? It is the atmosphere, the constant intrigues, the constant fear of Moscow, the spiritual submission, that kills every living impulse, and obliterates the personality, and leads to complete ossification. The Party bureaucrat, in his present incarnation, is nothing more than the product of inner Party circumstances.

But enough. You know all this every bit as well as I. And yet we differ in our conclusions.

Like every one of you, I have lived with these symptoms of degeneracy for years, and like you, I have always interpreted them as the deplorable but inescapable side-effects of the historical process. But now I am more and more convinced that we are dealing, not with secondary manifestations, but with an autonomous process. This process appears to be impelled by two principal forces. One is the absence of a system of revolutionary ethics, and the other is the ossification of Marxist theory.

Let me, to begin with, speak briefly about the first point. In the period of its ascendancy, the bourgeoisie possessed a clearly defined utilitarian system of morality. It rested on the remnants of feudalism, on the knightly concept of fair play, and from it developed the rules of the game for an era of free competition—which meant, it is true, that one was able to destroy one's competitors, but only so long as one kept to a particular and clearly defined set of rules. This utilitarian system of morals proved to be an indispensable condition of the victory of the bourgeoisie. Without it, the system of liberalism is unthinkable.

What is the situation with the ethics of the proletarian revolutionary struggle? Only naysayers and otherworldly eccentrics could maintain that the revolution must keep to the classical rules. For revolutionaries, liberal morality is unusable: this is clear. But what system should take its place? A sound, usable system of morality is not just a visionary ideal, it is also a practical necessity for any movement—as indispensable as a political program. As Malraux has said, "morality alone is not enough to make a revolution, but without it nothing can be made."

We have no new theory of revolutionary morals. We have only practice. It rests on the axiom, never clearly expressed but tacitly accepted, that the end justifies all means. This old battle-cry of the Jesuits, whose origin is obviously no accident, has been dialectically refurbished, and everybody knows that such dialectics permit all kinds of tricks. What sort of practice do we see emerging from such foggy premises?

It can be defined as follows. Anyone who expresses opposition to the general line, that is, to the specific tactics laid down by the leadership, even if it is only in the form of internal criticism, is damaging the movement. He is, by definition, helping the enemy, and objectively he becomes an accomplice of the enemy, and must automatically be rendered harmless by all available means, including deliberate defamation and even moral and physical destruction. What might actually be going on inside a man's head is of no interest. Whether he is subjectively well-intentioned or not, the subjective moment will be deliberately labeled objective, and he is "objectively an agent of the enemy." The recommendation of "clean" and "fair" methods of political struggle is dismissed as petty-bourgeois sentimentality or a vestige of liberalism. I believe that it was Lenin who coined the saying that a Party opponent must not only be conquered, but also made to look contemptible.

I do not know if and how such a system can be theoretically refuted. But I do know that in practice it has had appalling consequences. All the above symptoms of decay are its direct result.

One decisive objection can also be raised against it on the theoretical plane, namely, that the entire edifice rests on the premise that particular policies proposed by the leadership are automatically equated with the objective interests of the movement, and with human progress in general. If the leadership makes a mistake, however, it damages the movement, and helps its opponents, and is itself automatically transformed into an "objective agent of Fascism." When Lenin made the mistake, in 1920, of ordering his army to invade Poland, he was every bit as much an "objective agent of Fascism" as Trotsky or Bukharin are today, for whatever he thought when taking that notoriously false step, and whether his subjective intentions were good or bad, is of no interest. And the German Party, which

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supported the crazy policy of the "Red Plebiscite" in 1929 [the German Communist Party's policy of opposing the governing Social Democratic Party on the grounds that its leaders were "objectively" allied with the Fascists], was lock, stock and barrel, from top to bottom, acting as an "objective agent of Fascism."

It sounds ridiculous, but unfortunately it represents the logical application of our Party morality, in whose name opponents are liquidated and in whose name we intellectual "dialecticians" try to justify this murderous campaign to the public and to our own consciences.

I don't know how the new revolutionary morality can be supplied. I am not, God knows, a prophet. But simple experience convinces me that this morality leads to absurd theoretical consequences, and in its practical application is killing it root and branch.

What is the situation with regard to my second point, to theory? It has not been developed at all since Lenin died, so that we find ourselves completely at sea when confronted by the following characteristic feature of our age, namely that reactionary governments inimical to the interests of the people manage to get the widespread support of the masses. Marx established the laws of economic movements and more or less correctly forecast future economic developments, but there is not a hint of an explanation in our theory for the laws that impel the masses, instead of gradually coming to an understanding of their objective class interests, to act in strict opposition to those interests. Without the further development of theory, we can have no effective propaganda for the masses and no prospects for a successful campaign of struggle.

Our theory has not developed, it has ossified. At precisely the point where the problems began, the discussion was dictatorially curtailed. Political dictatorship bred ideological dictatorship. Editorial offices were ruled by Party sergeants, though real sergeants swear only on the parade ground, whereas ours gave us hell with dialectics. And the training went on for so long, and our fear of being thrown out of the Party, which had grown into our thoughts like fingernails into flesh, was so great, that we began not only to write like commandos, but also to think like them. Each of us had an imaginary warning sign hanging before his eyes: "Whoever thinks things through will be shot."

No, excuse me, it was different from that. It was: "Whoever thinks things through shoots himself." He destroys himself, physically or morally, because it is impossible to live outside the Party.

We grew blinders. We trained ourselves to see things in a perspective that did not correspond to reality. We did our thinking strictly within a closed logical system that had as little to do with the real world as the equally strict and twisted logic of schizophrenics. When Hitler smashed our movement, we denied that we had been defeated, and we proved logically that we had not been. When the Saar election campaign began, we maintained that whoever voted for the status quo was an agent of French imperialism, and we justified it. A month later, we ourselves backed the status quo, and we justified it. We swallowed everything.

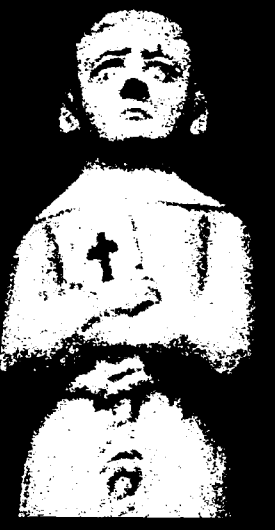
We dared not rock the boat. Two maxims had been drilled into us to fit all occasions. The first was: "No discussion at the front." The second was: "Wherever he is, a Communist is always at the front." We swallowed this, too, never noticing what a mockery it was.

What has become of us? When Lenin introduced the N.E.P. [in 1921] he wrote his article, "The Art of Climbing High Mountains," and explained the N.E.P. as a temporary but necessary step backwards. But when Stalin introduced his expulsion policies, he did not say that they were a necessary step backwards that could be discussed; he proclaimed his policies, which flatly contradicted the basic principles of Socialism, "a victory for Socialism." This example is a measure of the distance that we have come, of the total corruption of our ideology. Compare the language of *The Communist Manifesto* with a Comintern appeal of today. The last years of our Party press, its history from the International to the *Deutsche Volkszeitung* [*German People's Daily*, the German Communist Party's official newspaper, first in Berlin and then, after Hitler's rise to power in 1933, in Paris], shows how low a once ascendant movement can sink.

What is left? How, you will ask, when one thinks this way, can one continue to call oneself an ally?

The Soviet Union is left. Not Stalin, but the Soviet Union. It is the only hope offered by this miserable century. It is the foundation of the future. Whoever goes against the Soviet Union goes against the future. But whoever represents it as a finished prototype of the future, afflicted as it is by all the flaws of transition and by the adolescent growing pains of Stalinism, is offering us a caricature of the future. The Soviet Union is the most precious thing we have at present, but it is no prototype.

In other words, in its politics we must



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defend the Soviet Union at all costs. In its theory, however, it is an object of study, and study without criticism is unthinkable.

Is there no contradiction in what I am saying? Can one criticize without causing harm? Does criticism simply put weapons into the hands of the enemy?

For the longest time I believed so, but I believe so no longer. The dangers of these last years should convince us that the suppression of all criticism, the insistence on unconditional assent, the dictatorship of the word, has wrought immeasurably greater havoc than any kind of free and responsible criticism has ever done. It took me a long time to understand this simple truth, but now I do. And that is why I must bid you farewell.

I am nearly finished. I thought it my duty to inform you openly, whatever the cost, of why I cannot continue with you. We have traveled a long way together. For me, it has been seven years. I gambled my bourgeois livelihood and lost in order to serve the Party. But I have never regretted it. I did not regret it even during the three months that I was in a cell in Seville expecting to be shot. But now I feel that I am being suffocated by you, and I have the elementary need to breathe, to think, to write freely again, to dare to speak my mind.

I don't know if I will ever regret this step. I see no other way before me. But I know that your way is a dead end.

A.K.

IV.

The second letter is a masterpiece of critical analysis from inside the Communist movement. It touches on several issues that had been bothering Koestler for many months, notably the failure of Communist ideology to account for the popularity of Fascism with the masses, the increasingly dictatorial behavior of Party apparatchiks, and the ethical dilemma raised by the policy of deliberately placing ends before means. Its most surprising feature is its outspoken support for the Soviet Union, based on the perception that it was the only serious obstacle to the international triumph of Fascism. This belief was to come crashing down with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact a year and a half later; but for the moment Koestler's faith was intact.

How to account, then, for the suddenness of Koestler's decision to resign? It was certainly in keeping with Koestler's character, which placed a high premium on impulse and often got him into unexpected situations. Yet impulse was only confirming what he already knew: that his disillusionment with the Party had been ripening over many months, and all that was containing it was the habit of Party discipline. The fact that he wrote not one but two letters, separated by a week's reflection, shows that the resignation was more solidly based than Koestler later admitted.

This marked a profound turning point in his life—the most important turning point in a life that was not lacking in sudden changes of direction; and it would not be the last. Curiously enough, Koestler's resignation attracted little notice at the time. He was still a minor figure among the German émigré writers in Paris, and his insistence on keeping his resignation secret ensured that it did not leak out to wider circles. Indeed, when he was arrested in 1940, the French police seem to have been under the impression that he was still a member of the Party.

What endows the letters with additional interest is that they were written when Koestler had started work on his second novel. Tentatively entitled *The Vicious Circle*, this new work was to emerge as a dramatization, and a justification, of the psychological and ideological reasons for his resignation. It told of a group of prisoners in an unnamed totalitarian state who are under sentence of death, and reevaluate their lives before their execution. Each discovers that he is guilty, not of the crimes of which he is accused, but of the personal crime of sacrificing morality to expediency, of subordinating means to ends, in the name of the promotion of human happiness. Each also discovers that his death is necessary for that same promotion of human happiness, that he has no arguments with which to oppose the verdict. Each is caught within the vicious circle of his own ideology, and is left with no recourse but to embrace his own death.

This is the novel, of course, that became *Darkness at Noon*, still the finest fictional evocation of the heart of darkness at the core of Stalin's totalitarian empire that has ever been written. It is well known that one inspiration for the novel was the sensational show trial, in the spring of 1938, of a group of Communist Party leaders on charges of espionage, wrecking (that is, sabotage), plotting the dismemberment of the Soviet Union, and so on, and also of poisoning Maxim Gorky. Nikolai Bukharin, one of the original members of Lenin's Politburo, was additionally accused of having plotted to assassinate Lenin in 1918. He was one of the inspirations for the novel's hero, Nikolai Salmanovich Rubashov. (The other was Bukharin's codefendant Aleksei Rykov, the former Commissar of Communications, whom Koestler had met in Moscow in 1933.)

There was also a personal dimension to Koestler's novel. A Hungarian friend, Eva Zeisel, whom he had known since childhood, had recently shown up in London with a terrible tale of her 18 months in Soviet prisons on a trumped-up charge of espionage. Her husband Alex Weissberg, also Koestler's friend, was still in jail on charges of being a Trotskyite; and Koestler's brother-in-law, Dr. Ernst Ascher, had been arrested in Saratov and accused of deliberately injecting patients with syphilis. Koestler himself had experienced torments in a Spanish jail that were not unlike Zeisel's Soviet ordeals, and he had acquired a unique grasp of the thought processes of a prisoner condemned to death for his political beliefs.

Thus, when Koestler read accounts of the Moscow show trials, he was thunderstruck by Bukharin's admission that, although he had never committed the acts of terrorism of which he was accused, he might be held "objectively" responsible for them. Equally astonishing was Bukharin's statement that he had degenerated into an "enemy of socialism," and his attack on Western commentators for suggesting that his confession was not voluntary. He deserved to be executed, he said, as a lesson to those who were wavering in their support of the Soviet Union and its leadership.

Koestler had met Bukharin in Moscow, and he admired him as a model of intellectual rigor and clarity. How could a man of such rational intelligence be forced to make such a ridiculous confession? We know now of the extreme psychological and physical punishments meted out by Stalin's interrogators to their political prisoners, but in the 1930s the whole thing was shrouded in mystery. Western observers of unimpeachable integrity testified to the fact that the condemned men spoke willingly in open court. How could that be?

Koestler was aware of some degree of physical coercion, but he concluded that two powerful forces had converged in the consciousness of the prisoners. One was political loyalty, resulting in a lifelong habit of obedience to Party authority. The other was a sense of personal guilt, which was the psychological motor that had driven idealistic middle-class Communists to identify with the plight of the proletarian masses in the first place, and which reinforced the attraction of these unfortunates to the social virtues of loyalty and solidarity. The vast majority of

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the German Party comrades to whom Koestler addressed his letter consisted of just such middle-class idealists, who felt forever guilty about their material privileges and despaired of attaining the degree of self-abnegation that would transform them into proletarians.

Darkness at Noon was written during the gloomy days of the preparations for world war, and it was completed shortly before its outbreak. When it was published in England in December 1940, Koestler was sitting in an English prison cell, having been detained as an enemy alien. The symbolism seems irresistible; but Koestler was released after six weeks, and he hoped to enjoy the success of his novel.

It was not a success. The exigencies of the war virtually obliterated it from public consciousness after a very short time. Its message remained as secret as Koestler's resignation from the Party, until time ripened. When his book finally burst upon the public with the force of a revelation, soon after the end of the war, the process set in motion by Koestler's letters of 1938 was complete. •

Janeism

By Richard Jenkyns

Jane Austen: A Life by Claire Tomalin

(Knopf, 341 pp., $27.50)

Jane Austen: A Life by David Nokes

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 578 pp., $35)

Charles Dickens was born in Hampshire, but when you cross into the county from Sussex the sign reads: "Hampshire—Jane Austen's county." Only one other English county identifies itself by a literary son or daughter in this way; but then Warwickshire does have Shakespeare to boast about. Jane Austen's star seems to rise on and on. The recent spate of film adaptations may be over, but they were anyway the consequence, not the cause, of her popularity. Her influence extends even into low-brow fiction: the heroes of most cheap romances are either Darcy, Heathcliff, or Rochester. (It is curious, or maybe not, that all three heroes should be the inventions of maiden daughters of English parsons within a period of 50 years.) Nor has Austen's accessibility, and the favor of the common reader, put off the highbrows. Her reputation among professors and intellectuals seems to be greater than ever.

Austen's vast readership enables her to be described in superlatives. She has possibly given pleasure to more men in bed than any woman in history. As many men may have fancied themselves in love with Elizabeth Bennet as with Claudia Schiffer. *Pride and Prejudice* is likely to be the most re-read book in English. And more than with any English author except Shakespeare, Austen's admirers have wanted to know about her life, which was famously not very long and not very eventful. So here are two new biographies.

One side-effect of this appetite for the details of Austen's life has been the light that it sheds on social history. The Austens have found themselves perhaps the most intensely studied small gentry family of the time. What may strike us most, in the consideration of Austen's background, is the fluidity and the mobility of English society. Both David Nokes and Claire Tomalin look back to the origins of the Austen family. (And both, surprisingly, go in for the olde heritage shoppe business of transcribing "the" in eighteenth-century documents as "ye": a very filly practife.) The Austens were tradesmen in Kent who made money and lifted themselves into the lower reaches of gentility. But for complicated reasons, having to do with deaths and wills, the early life of George Austen, the novelist's father, was difficult and insecure. Still, he got himself to Oxford and into a college fellowship; he was handsome and he married well.

His sister exported herself to India in the hope of picking up a husband there, and married a man much older than herself. Her only child, Eliza Hancock, was probably the illegitimate daughter of

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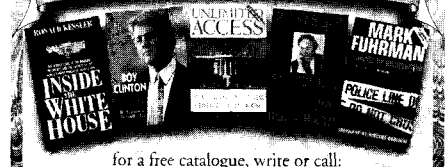

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the great proconsul Warren Hastings, Governor of Bengal. She in turn was to marry first a French count who lost his head in the Terror, and then her first cousin, Jane Austen's brother Henry. Jane's mother, Cassandra Leigh, came of more aristocratic stock. The family seat, Stoneleigh Abbey, is a baroque mansion of palatial size. There was a barony in the family, and Jane was also related through the Leighs to the Duke of Chandos, one of the grandest grandees in the realm. But grand connections did not mean grand living, and she and her parents were short of money for most of their lives.

The same fluidity can be seen in the fortunes of her brothers' descendants. From her eldest brother James, who was regarded in his youth as the literary one in the family, comes a dynasty of clergymen, dons, and civil servants, with at least one author of a published book in each of the next five generations; this branch of the family provides us with almost all the information we have about Jane, outside her own letters and writings. Another brother, Edward, who was adopted by a rich childless couple called Knight, rose into the upper gentry and became "county," with great houses in Kent and Hampshire. His family declined gently through the twentieth century. (Chawton House, in the shadow of which the novelist spent her last years, was recently sold to a Californian Janeite who made her money in computers.) Francis was the more successful of the two sailor brothers, rising to a knighthood and the exalted station of an Admiral of the Fleet. Charles, despite ending with an admiral's rank, had a life dogged with misfortune; and so far did his descendants sink on the social scale that one of his great-grandsons became a grocer's assistant, another a bricklayer.

Jane Austen understood all this social flux. Her women may have the chance to make a brilliant match, but they also face the danger of a penurious spinsterhood. If they attract a suitor who is below them in the social scale, they may have to weigh the odds and decide whether to accept the opportunity at hand, or to hold out for the uncertain chance of something better.

Some may wonder if another biography of Jane Austen is really needed. If there is to be one, however, it could not be done much better than it has been by Claire Tomalin. This is a life written with sense and sensibility. Tomalin's judgments are convincing, her style is easy and attractive, her sense of period is good. It is true that she is ready to risk some psychological speculation, but this is done with tact and restraint. Only in dealing with Austen's religion does Tomalin seem inadequate; and after providing a brief paragraph at the end of a chapter, she quits so embarrassing a subject as soon as she can. But Jane Austen was a seriously religious woman, who composed prayers for her private devotion. It is a distortion to underplay this side of her being.

Still, Tomalin is wise not to claim to know too much about her subject, concluding that "she is as elusive as a cloud in the night sky" and agreeing with David Cecil's verdict that she remains "as no doubt she would have wished—not an intimate but an acquaintance." That, after all, is how we know most people. It is no great paradox to say that we get closest to Jane Austen by recognizing our distance from her.

But David Nokes displays no such reticence. His book is irreparably vitiated by the disastrous decision to invent motives, attitudes, and episodes with a novelist's omniscience. A good deal of this has a Harlequin flavor: "Philadelphia took up the letter once more, which trembled in her hand"; "That night, as she lay on her bed, listening to the sound of the rain on the window-pane, and feeling still the dull ache in her back, Jane allowed herself to imagine how it might have been." What readers want to have these dull fancies inflicted on them? The trouble with these inventions, even if they were more imaginative than they are, is that they block our view of the subject. It is often difficult to tell the boundary between fact and Nokes's fiction; but even where the fiction is open, it is an obstacle to clear understanding. Nokes has interposed his body between the lady and ourselves.

The problem is made worse by some of Nokes's extraordinary misinterpretations. One example will have to suffice. In 1813, Jane wrote a hilarious, high-spirited letter to her sister about *Pride and Prejudice*:

> The work is rather too light and bright and sparkling;—it wants shade;—it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long Chapter—of sense if it could be had, if not of solemn specious nonsense—about something unconnected with the story; an Essay on Writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparte—or anything that would form a contrast and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and Epigrammatism of the general stile.—I doubt your quite agreeing with me here—I know your starched Notions.

Tomalin aptly observes that few passages in Jane's letters are "so happy, so witty, so free as this." Amazingly, Nokes (who is never slow to attribute mean motives to his heroine) takes the letter seriously, and announces that Jane was carried away by vanity into the belief that there was nothing she dared not, or could not, write. More amazing still, he keeps returning to his folly, like the dog in the Bible: he tells us that she returned to her scheme of writing a biography of Napoleon and later, in a chastened mood, she abandoned it.

To lack a sense of irony is a particularly serious deficiency in writing about this of all writers. It is this deficiency, or a deliberate tendentiousness, that leads Nokes sporadically to depict Austen as a wild, rebellious character. Much of this is done by quoting out of context. "Pictures of perfection . . . make me sick and wicked," she said; but this was the conspiratorial mock-naughtiness of a favorite aunt writing to a child. Briefly lionized in London, she told her sister, "If I *am* a wild beast, I cannot help it"; but the joke lies in the extreme incongruity of the description. Less than three days before her death, she composed her last work, some doggerel verses (pretty poor, alas) about St. Swithin and the Winchester races. St. Swithin's Day is the English equivalent of Groundhog Day, and the poem explains that the saint has put a curse on the weather because he disapproves of racing. "The last words she ever wrote took the form of a curse," declares Nokes, exultantly. How sad, not to admire the courage of a woman who struggled to produce a cheerful piece of nonsense in the very jaws of death.

What is true is that Austen's juvenilia reveal an often boisterous, hoydenish, sometimes even surreal imagination. This suggests how self-conscious is the chastened surface of her mature work. Indeed, we may feel, if we read the books attentively, that the exuberance is still there as a potentiality kept in check, with the suppressed energy of a coiled spring. Still, as far as her life itself is concerned, surely the puzzle about Jane Austen is that she did *not* rebel. It is not as though restlessness was unthinkable: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* appeared in 1792, when Jane was 21 years old.

One way of explaining Austen's apparent docility has been to present her as a Tory intellectual, whose books express a principled, fully worked-out opposition to the tenets of Romanticism. Yet one should always be suspicious of professors who try to turn geniuses into people much like themselves. We have the testimony of those who knew Austen that she showed no interest in politics and public issues. Though her letters seem to confirm this, they make uncertain evidence, since we know that her sister Cassandra destroyed many of them, and the lighter

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gossip had a better chance of survival. More telling is the witness of the novels themselves. Austen's heroines are intelligent (in the case of Elizabeth Bennet, very intelligent), but none has a trace of the bluestocking about her. Marianne Dashwood believes passionately in poetry and emotion, but she is not concerned with social or political debate.

Perhaps we may better understand Austen's strange quietude by considering the matter of her precocity. This takes us to the central mystery about the facts of her life. We know that in her early twenties she wrote first versions of the novels that we know as *Northanger Abbey* (then called *Susan*), *Sense and Sensibility* (then called *Elinor and Marianne*) and *Pride and Prejudice* (then called *First Impressions*). It was ten years or so before she returned to these manuscripts and revised or recast them. How radically did she change them?

Both Nokes and Tomalin suppose that the earlier versions were essentially the books that we have today. (Tomalin admits that this is a hunch, but Nokes's pose of omniscience allows him no room for hesitation.) Jane Austen is indeed an extraordinary phenomenon on any account, but if they are right, we are faced with one of the most astonishing occurrences in all literary history. *Pride and Prejudice* is perhaps the most perfect comedy of manners ever written in prose. *Sense and Sensibility*, a jagged, imperfect, and deeply poignant book, contains in its second chapter what remains the most sustainedly savage passage of satire in English literature: the scene in which Mrs. John Dashwood, in a sequence of 13 speeches, beats down her husband from his proposal to settle 3,000 pounds on his mother and half-sisters to the conclusion that he will be doing very well by them if he sends them the occasional piece of fish or game. Auden says of Austen in his *Letter to Lord Byron*, "You cannot shock me half as she shocks me. / Beside her Joyce is innocent as grass." One might add that she etches her portrait of human selfishness and hardness of heart here with an acid more accurately corrosive than anything in Swift.

We thus face the possibility that prose fiction which matched and in some respects surpassed anything that anyone had produced anywhere was written by a very young woman with a rather slight education and very little knowledge of the world; and that these masterpieces then sat, unknown, in a country vicarage for a decade and more. A very few poets and composers have achieved greatness even in their teens, but it is hard to think of another novelist who has flown so high so early.

Well, the adolescent Jane certainly was precocious. Her juvenilia are probably the most widely read of any novelist's. Indeed, she is probably the youngest author to be at all commonly read, except for the nine-year-old Daisy Ashford, whose *The Young Visiters* remains unique in the world as the only literary masterpiece written by a child. *Love and Freindship*, a parody of the epistolary novel of sentiment written when Jane was 14, remains very funny, though it turns out that its most famous line ("We fainted alternately upon a sofa") was stolen from Sheridan, and *The History of England* ("by a partial, prejudiced, and ignorant Historian"), written a little later, provides a good many simple laughs; but one may still feel about these works as one does about the star turn at the school concert, that a part of our pleasure in the performance is the consciousness that the performer is remarkably good for her age. The teenage Austen was very bright, but she was not a prodigy.

Yet her mature work—whether she came to maturity in her twenties or her thirties—is utterly prodigious in its technical control. Whatever unhappiness and disappointments there may have been in her life, as an artist Austen is serene; and maybe she could afford to be quiet because she had such self-possession. When *Emma* and *Mansfield Park* were published, she jotted down her friends' and relations' opinions of the books, good and bad. Nokes sees her as touchy about the reception of her work, but Tomalin is surely right to say that "something like Olympian laughter arises from the page." More than any novelist in English, more even than Henry James, Austen seems to know exactly what she is doing.

As great a writer as George Eliot was damaged as an artist by the disabilities of being a woman; excluded from what she once called "the Eleusinian mysteries of a university education," she could not resist the impulse to show off her self-taught erudition (which was formidable). Jane Austen, by contrast, simply rests her confidence in the innate quality of her mind. In *Persuasion*, when Anne Elliot talks to Captain Harville—in the interchange overheard by Wentworth, which leads him to propose to her—we realize that we are hearing something extremely rare in literature: an intelligent, equal, and entirely serious conversation between a man and a woman. Almost any other writer would have had them talk about literature or politics (George Eliot would have had them discussing Sophocles), but Austen is content to demonstrate the heroine's intelligence—and able to bring the demonstration off—in a conversation simply about human relations.

Her technical command of form is seen at its most brilliant in *Pride and Prejudice*. When Coleridge said that *Tom Jones* had one of the three great plots in literature, he presumably had not read this novel; otherwise he would have needed to add a fourth. It is equally hard to believe that so elegantly complex a plot could have been devised by a writer in her early twenties, or that it evolved from an earlier, less masterly version—one of these two possibilities must be the case. The novel is a superb piece of machinery, and a part of our proper pleasure in the book lies in our appreciation of the quality of the engineering and the smoothness of the ride.

Pride and Prejudice is so perfect a novel that it is almost a point of honor with critics to find flaws in it. Tomalin suggests that the offstage wickedness of Wickham seems unconvincing: from what we see of him, he appears frivolous rather than evil. Maybe there is something in this, but the issue can be looked at another way. Austen is always a severe judge, with demanding standards; and in this respect, *Pride and Prejudice* is not as far away from *Mansfield Park* as people often think. She wants us to see that an attrac-

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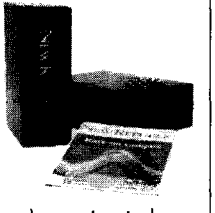

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Apprentice Chef

Growing a fruit salad for dessert,
the stolid apples, being first and hard,
the heart of them gone, as base,
he daydreamed about the seamstress
who pinned his left ankle to the cuff
and smiled up at him with orange lips.

The plump grapes as complacent
as churchgoers, the kiwi bragging
their wide smiles of fertility,
all that sweetness, so many seeds,
he sliced the tip of his index finger off
and couldn't find it anywhere,
guessed what was beginning.

MARTIN GALVIN

tive, engaging person may be not only selfish, but also vindictive.

The primary plot of the novel, of course, concerns the love between Elizabeth and Darcy, and most of the subplots can be expressed in terms of an ultimate marriage: Jane and Bingley, Lydia and Wickham, Charlotte and Mr. Collins. The other subplot is formed from the enmity between Darcy and Wickham. These five plots are woven together with exemplary skill, the crucial mechanism being the admission of two coincidences: that Darcy and Wickham, for quite separate reasons, should turn up in the same part of the country at the same time, and that the heir on whom the Bennets' property is entailed should happen to be the protegé of Darcy's aunt. That is just what a plot of a novel of manners should be: an essentially naturalistic situation given shape and neatness by the sort of coincidences that do occur from time to time in real life.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's mastery extends into the shaping of each chapter. Consider the very first of these. She will have heard readings from the Psalms in church almost every week of her life: their rhythms, with verse answering to verse, or half-verse to half-verse, echoing, amplifying, or explaining, must surely have sunk deep into her consciousness:

> The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth in his handiwork. One day telleth another: and one night certifieth another.

Such are the rhythms of the most famous opening in English literature:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.
>
> However little known the feeling or views of such a man may be on his first entering into a neighborhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

The first of these sentences is always quoted on its own, but Austen designs them as a pair, versicle and response, in unconscious echo, I think, of the cadences of the Book of Common Prayer.

These apothegms stand like the two pillars of a proscenium framing the stage. Abruptly the general gives way to the particular; the curtain rises, and we are plunged immediately, without a word of explanation about the setting or the characters, into the first scene of a comic drama: "'My dear Mr. Bennet,' said his lady to him one day...." And the rest of the chapter is pure dialogue, more like what we expect from a play than a conventional novel. (Austen is, with Dickens, the most theatrical of English novelists; she loved playacting in her youth. This makes the censure of the amateur theatricals in *Mansfield Park* the more puzzling.) The perky inflection of "'Mr. Bennet,' said his lady" deftly signals the genre. We learn at once from the tone, as clearly as from the first tune in a Rossini overture, that this is to be a comedy.

The leading lady will not appear until the second scene. Lizzy's name, with the first hints about her different relationship to two parents, is increasingly slipped into the latter part of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet's conversations, so that we suspect that she is to be the heroine of the story; but as in *Hamlet* or *Twelfth Night*, the central character's first entrance is anticipated but held back for the moment. Finally, the first chapter is rounded off with a short paragraph summing up the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and the nature of their marriage, a beautifully unmanipulative paragraph because it crystallizes and clarifies what we suspect that we have already learned from listening to them talking to each other. To adjust the metaphor a little, the ironically detached sentences of aphorism and summary at either end frame the chapter, and everything in between is pure "stage action," unmediated by authorial comment.

Very few novelists compose a chapter like this, with the shape and the balance of a piece of music. And this formal mastery extends throughout the book. We might think of the two proposals to Elizabeth placed in the middle of the book: they are contrasted in so many obvious ways, and yet they are alike as object lessons in how not to propose. The later chapters are conceived as a series of duets between the heroine and another character: Elizabeth and Lady Catherine, Elizabeth and Darcy, the two contrasted interviews between Elizabeth and her father, and so on. Diverse in character, these encounters are nonetheless in the comic mode—except for an instant when Mr. Bennet is trying to dissuade his daughter from marrying Darcy: "My child, let me not have the grief of seeing *you* unable to respect your partner in life."

It is a marvelous and terrible moment, one of the most important in the whole book. (It was altogether fluffed in the recent BBC television adaptation.) Briefly Mr. Bennet drops the mask, revealing the deadness of his marriage, the emotional emptiness of his life. And he reveals something more: the long unspoken understanding between himself and his favorite daughter. He despises his wife. He knows that Elizabeth knows; and he knows that she knows that he knows. Almost any other writer, having conceived such a moment, would have milked it for pathos. With masterly restraint, Austen allows the cloud to obscure the sun for only a few seconds; and by the end of the scene, which is not long, the mask has been replaced, and Mr. Bennet is his usual, sardonically witty self. Virginia Woolf once said about Austen that "of all great writers she is the most difficult to catch in the act of greatness." This is quite false. There is hardly another novelist of whom one may so readily say, "That chapter, that paragraph, that sentence is a moment of genius."

Her quietness, and her acceptance of the limits that her sex and her time imposed upon her, may seem the more surprising because she understood loneliness, frustration, and emotional starvation so well. We can see this in *Emma*, along with *Mansfield Park* the most easily misunderstood of the novels. Since it is so familiar a fact to us that all of the novels have happy endings, we can easily miss that this is the one among them which looks as though it may well end sadly. The heroine is set up right at the beginning as a lucky, apparently secure person who seems destined (we suspect) to find herself brought low. The unfolding of the plot encourages the belief that someone at least must be left unhappy. Once Mr. Elton imports his bride from outside,

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there seem to be not enough men to go around: Jane Fairfax, Harriet Smith, and Emma herself all need husbands, and it appears that only two men, Frank Churchill and Mr. Knightley, are available.

There have been three—perhaps one should say two and a half—recent dramatizations of *Emma*: a movie starring Gwyneth Paltrow, a film made by British Independent Television, and of course *Clueless*, in which the basic storyline is transferred to the ditzy, tony San Fernando Valley of today. Of these versions, *Clueless* shows the best appreciation of the book. What it recognizes, as the others do not, is that Emma is affectionate and lovable. (Austen's own remark, that she intended to create a heroine whom no one but herself would much like, has probably done a good deal to mislead.) Nokes is probably representing a common view when he describes *Emma* as a novel "in which the sins of selfishness and snobbery might receive their just rebuke." It is true Emma thinks social distinctions important—but she is not a snob. She has no ambition whatever to raise herself beyond the circumscribed conditions of her life by a good marriage. Indeed, she thinks that she does not want to marry at all. Mrs. Elton is a snob, and Emma finds her snobbery repulsive. And far from scorning the dim, illegitimate Harriet, she wants her to share as much as possible of her own experience.

Clueless almost entirely ignores the Miss Bates subplot, but it is the only one of the three films to understand the famous scene on Box Hill when Emma hurts Miss Bates's feelings with an ill-judged joke. (The other two films represent it as a ponderous and premeditated piece of cruelty, which makes no kind of sense.) *Clueless* recognizes that it is an accident. Emma's life is so enclosed that even a picnic on a hillside a few miles from home is an escape. She is carried away by high spirits and a sense of freedom, and before she knows it, the wounding words have dropped out.

The person who is draining the life out of Emma is her father, Mr. Woodhouse. This is a brilliant portrait: there is perhaps not a word of criticism spoken of him in the entire book, he is genuinely a charming old boy, and yet he is a bloodsucker. For he is against life. Whenever anyone wants to have fun, his instinct is—so amiably, so solicitously—to prevent them. In *Clueless*, the father is made into a successful, driven lawyer, very unlike the idle potterer in the novel; but the film again understands that the father is needed by his daughter, as the object on which a warm heart can expend its affection, and that he is an incubus. Emma gets her man somewhat further from the end of the book than is usual, and this means that we can observe the joy burst forth from the silken constrictions that have bound her. Even so, dear Mr. Woodhouse continues to plot against her happiness up to the very last page. He will not give his consent to the marriage, because it would inconvenience him not to have his daughter constantly around him; and even when a spate of local burglaries frightens him into thinking he should have a younger man at hand, he wins a last petty victory for his selfishness. Mr. Knightley has to leave the home he loves and go to live in his father-in-law's house.

Mansfield Park is another study of the etiolating effect of emotionally barren comfort. It is the most somber in tone of the novels. Indeed, it is commonly said that Mrs. Norris is the nastiest character in any of them. (The honor ought to be bestowed upon General Tilney, but the genial, lightly satirical tone of *Northanger Abbey* leads many readers to overlook him.) Mrs. Norris is indeed meanly, grindingly unkind to poor Fanny, but Austen has the moral largeness to pity her as well as to hate her—and to recognize how much more harshly people are judged if they lack charm.

Many readers find Fanny Price too meek and too goody-goody to be likeable. In Nokes's words, "The real difficulty with Fanny Price was that she was a heroine who had nothing to learn. Conceived from the start as a figure of faultless, if modest, virtue, she had none of those engaging frailties, those girlish vanities from which it must be equally the task of a conscientious authoress and upright hero to rescue her." But Austen is more subtle than that. There is scarcely a more desolating moment in fiction than the return of Fanny from her natural family's vibrant, noisy, slatternly life in Portsmouth, where she has been able to see her adored brother William after a long separation, to the barren comforts of Mansfield Park. For she is relieved to be back. To sit in the drawing room for hours by the dull, slothful Lady Bertram, whose strongest passion is a faint good nature: this is a relief! In *Little Dorrit*, Dickens tried to portray a heroine who was essentially pure and good and yet somehow touched with the taint of her upbringing in a debtor's prison, but he did not know how to do it; the alleged taint remains a datum, asserted by the writer but not realized in the story. Austen, by contrast, shows us a woman who is both virtuous and damaged.

Austen is often accused of judging too

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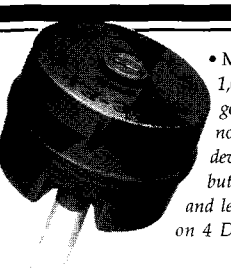

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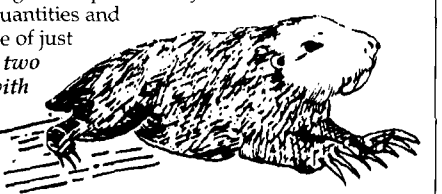

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hardly the delightful, worldly Crawfords in *Mansfield Park*. But Henry Crawford does wreck Mrs. Rushworth's life, and Mary Crawford, in her pursuit of wealth and title, does come to hope for young Tom Bertram's death. Still, we cannot help liking them; such is the writer's cunning. Mrs. Norris, whom nobody likes, displays one virtue in a very high degree: loyalty. Charmless and emotionally deprived, she pours a passionate devotion upon the unworthy Mrs. Rushworth, and when Mrs. Rushworth is ruined by her adultery, Mrs. Norris remains faithful. Abandoning the small comforts of her own life, she follows Mrs. Rushworth into exile. People think that Austen is punishing Mrs. Norris, in the way that Dickens punishes the villains at the end of his books; but Mrs. Norris is punishing herself. She is perfectly horrible, of course, and yet she is capable of a degree of self-sacrifice that, to the Crawfords, would be unthinkable.

Fanny will finally escape from the emotional desert in which Mrs. Norris has wandered all her life. She will not, like Mrs. Norris, remain the poor relation for ever, dependent and looked down upon; and she will find a husband. Reality could be more unkind. Indeed, one may be struck by how much sadness there is in the lives of Jane and her family, especially in Tomalin's telling of the story. Jane's sister Cassandra lost her fiancé, who died of a fever in the West Indies; she had staked her whole happiness on him, and seems never to have considered another man. Jane's cousin Eliza not only lost her first husband to the guillotine, but her only child died in boyhood after many years of sickness, and she herself was to die agonizingly of cancer in her early fifties. Jane herself was parted from the first and perhaps the chief love of her life, the young Irishman Tom Lefroy, and never saw him again.

Years later, Jane accepted a proposal from a prosperous, foolish Hampshire squire, only to withdraw her acceptance the next day. The marriage would have given her money and comfort, but no doubt she said to herself what Mr. Bennet said to his Lizzy: "I know that you could be neither happy nor respectable unless you truly esteemed your husband; unless you looked up to him as a superior. Your lively talents would place you in the greatest danger in an unequal marriage." Such are the realities which lie behind these amazing novels, not concealed or evaded in them, but shaped to the purposes of comedy, with gaiety and courage of heart.

RICHARD JENKYNS is a fellow of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

Eyeless in Zion

BY STEVEN J. ZIPPERSTEIN

The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State by Zeev Sternhell translated by David Maisel

(Princeton University Press, 419 pp., $29.95)

Zeev Sternhell, a well-known Israeli historian of European fascism, has written a book designed to shock. It may well be the oddest scholarly book on Zionism in recent memory. It is infuriating, fascinating, and almost bizarrely unpersuasive. It provides as close an encounter as one is likely to have outside Israel with the highly vocal, culturally fertile, and politically doctrinaire side of its left-wing intellectual life. What is revealed in this book is that the chief enemy of this Left is not the Right, it is the Labor Party of the late Yitzhak Rabin.

Sternhell argues that the Labor Zionist founders of the Jewish state, who dominated its affairs from the beginning of the Mandate period until the election of Menachem Begin in 1977, were outright frauds. David Ben Gurion and his colleagues emerge from Sternhell's reading as extreme nationalists who cloaked themselves in pious, empty, and clever socialist rhetoric. In fact, Sternhell believes, their goals were little different from those of the right wing of the Zionist movement: the consolidation of Jewish economic and political power in Palestine, the ingathering of the Jews, the creation of a Jewish state. Socialism assisted them in solidifying their hold on the Jewish masses, and in building a centralized economy, and in firming up, as Sternhell very provocatively puts it, "nationalist socialism."

The universalistic aspirations of socialism never mattered to them, says Sternhell. What mattered to them always were the "tribal" demands of the Jews. They settled in Palestine at the turn of the twentieth century, coming mostly from the townlets of the Pale of Settlement in Russia. Hard as they worked to look and sound "progressive"—this was a part of the cultural baggage that they took with them from the turbulent politics of Russia before the revolution of 1905—they remained inescapably small-town Jews. This hobbled them, and reduced their interests to things exclusively Jewish, with the worst influence being (Sternhell speaks of it with special scorn) the traditional Jewish primary school, the *heder*. Such schools and synagogues ("[they] huddled around their synagogues and rabbinical schools") stamped them and their works for the remainder of their lives.

They never escaped the confines of these *shtetls*, places where old, benign Tevye is displaced in Sternhell's account by vile Rasputin-like figures. With a perversity all the more scandalous because it was so calculated and so surreptitious, the Labor Zionists imposed this way of life onto Palestine. Speaking in egalitarian terms, they promoted parochialism; acting the role of courageous secularists, they remained privately wedded, almost like the marranos of old, to a religious sensibility. Yet, as Sternhell writes, "the radical nationalist, secular in his daily life and usually lacking a solid Jewish culture, needs the Sabbath, the religious festivals and their ceremonies ... as much as a fish needs water."

Sternhell tells of a lifelong concealment by Zionist secularists who practiced, or at least remained secretly committed to, fanatical nonsense imbibed as children. The delicate, sophisticated interplay found in the leading Zionist intellectuals—in A.D. Gordon or Ahad Ha'am, who sought to construct out of old and new sources a transformed identity, much like their counterparts in nationalism elsewhere in Europe—this Sternhell indicts as the chief ingredient of their movement's protofascism. True, he claims that this nationalist socialist "ideology was unable to reach fulfillment"—by which he means a full-fledged fascism—because Jewish Palestine "was a society in the process of construction and incapable of translating the principles of cultural rebellion into

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government policy." Still, "the special Jewish character of Eretz Israeli socialism was sufficient to make it a form of nationalist socialism."

Sternhell's portrait of the larger Russian milieu is unspeakably hateful and xenophobic. It is sketched in terms reminiscent of old anti-imperial diatribes. The widespread impact of secularizing forces on Russian society is excised completely from Sternhell's account. Its depiction of Russian urban life in the last years of the regime is simply unrecognizable:

> a world of violent and vociferous nationalities, a world with no national or religious tolerance, a world in which the distinction between religion and nation, or between religion, society, and the state was unknown, and perhaps inconceivable. Such distinctions were luxuries that only the Western European societies could afford.

To be sure, there were Palestinian pioneers, especially those influenced by the Marxist-Zionist Ber Borokhov, who came to the Middle East armed with an admirable "social agenda"—which, in this book, almost always means a Marxist one. Throughout Sternhell's narrative there are fleeting glimmers of hope, a handful of heroes painted in socialist-realist hues: there is Borokhov (whose retreat from his original, hardline Marxist categories never detains Sternhell), and there are the leaders of the quasi-anarchist, staunchly Zionist *Gdud Ha-Avodah* of the early 1920s. Sternhell celebrates these figures lavishly.

But pity these poor progressives! For they found themselves pitted against manipulative, cruel pragmatists, such as David Ben Gurion. And ideological battles, as related by Sternhell, were wars between good and evil, progress and reaction. Sternhell is not evasive about his intentions. He is writing a morality tale. It begins as Labor Zionism obliterates its left-wing opponents, and represses and destroys their socialist designs, and substitutes in their place a crass, degenerate form of nationalism, and sets in motion a mindless, corrosive expansionism that results, inevitably, in the impasse of the 1990s.

The great turning point, in Sternhell's account, was Labor Zionism's retreat in the early years of this century from the original Borokhovian goal of a classless society in Palestine. The alternative, promoted most vigorously by Ben Gurion, the villain of Sternhell's book, is nationalist socialism. Sternhell means the term to be an ominous one. (He lifts his categories wholesale from his work on the intellectual origins of fascism in Europe and forces them on Zionism.) Still, it is never clear whether nationalist socialism constitutes much more than non-Marxist nationalism: "When nationalism is used for state-building, it is generally incompatible with liberal democratic values." That is Sternhell's axiom, the unexamined belief at the heart of his book.

Since neither Ben Gurion nor his colleague, the influential Labor ideologist and journalist Berl Katznelson, were committed to "changing" the *Yishuv*—which, in Sternhell's parlance, means socialist revolution in a Marxist mold—their efforts had nothing less than proto-fascistic implications. Only universalistic ideologies, such Marxism or liberalism, as Sternhell states flatly, are capable of creating the basis for "the liberation of humankind from social, national, and religious oppression." He cannot imagine that Marxism or liberalism can be joined to nationalism in any moral or constructive way.

Ben Gurion's Labor Zionism is antidemocratic, hostile to all egalitarianism, self-serving, and (as Sternhell repeats often) essentially Russian. Eschewing the universalism that (in Sternhell's view) is an essential feature of Marxism, the Labor leaders of Palestine seek merely increased Jewish immigration, and emphasize blood ties over class, and talk lovingly of holistic, integral nationalism. To hide their backsliding, leaders of Jewish Palestine searched for an "alibi," as Sternhell calls it, a way to obscure their movement's true, parochial, essentially religious goals. Labor Zionist founders such as Ben Gurion were "largely speaking, identical to ... the leaders of religious Zionism." He states, flatly: "In the Zionism of the Left, secularism was only a veneer." The true "emotional center" of socialist Zionism was, in fact, the same as that of religious Zionism: the belief that the "reconquest of the ancestral homeland [was] sacred."

The cunning reactionaries of Labor Zionism resort to conspiracy because they refuse to acknowledge the implications of their parochialism. They hide their true goals behind marginal, economically irrelevant enterprises such as the *kibbutzim*, whose egalitarianism they really deplore, but which provide them with a useful way to deflect the attention of socialists abroad and infantile leftists at home. They use socialism as way of mobilizing the masses, and also of centralizing the economy of Jewish Palestine under the aegis of an all-powerful Labor Federation, the Histadrut.

In Sternhell's account, socialism is something so abstract, so good, so ethereal, that there is, despite the book's quite worldly savagery, a curiously unreal and donnish aura to it. "True socialism," Sternhell admits, only in passing, never succeeded. "Marxism in general [in the Soviet Union] was never carried out." But this does not present Sternhell from comparing the socialist policies of Léon Blum's short-lived French government of the 1930s to those of Ben Gurion's tenure as head of the Israeli Labor Movement in Jewish Palestine; and the Zionist leader is made to look in such comparisons, not surprisingly, like a shrunken Plonsk Jew, a bigshot in a small pond.

But hubris was the least of Ben Gurion's sins. He is held chiefly responsible here for having orchestrated the collapse of socialism in Jewish Palestine, where, as a result of his policies, no significant difference existed between right and left before or after 1948. The Palestinian Jewish bourgeoisie knew that they had nothing to fear from either the Labor Party or the kibbutz movements. The Labor leadership itself was utterly corrupt: Ben Gurion (who ran a rather modest home) is depicted by Sternhell as rapacious and extravagant. Indeed, it was a sign of this corruption that he and his cronies worked closely, if surreptitiously, with all sectors of politics and the economy. The right and the left have always known "very well that they are on the same side."

True, Sternhell veers between the assertion that Jewish Palestine was "not basically different from any normal capitalist society" and the charge that democracy was incongruous in a political culture that is inescapably racialist and religious. The Israeli state's ideological founders were men who refused to permit anything to obstruct their goals: "In principle, there were no limits to their nationalist extremism: the limits were fixed by conditions prevailing at a given time, by the limits of power and by that of the Yishuv." The expansionism of Israel after the 1967 war, as Sternhell sees it, was not at all a deviation from the program of Zionism's socialist fathers. It followed squarely, ineluctably in their footsteps.

How, then, did Yitzhak Rabin, the scion of Labor Zionism and the founding elite of the state, make peace with the Palestinians? On Sternhell's reading of the history of Zionism, this is an unfathomable mystery. But there is nothing at all mysterious about Rabin's murder and the abortion (or the drastic transmutation) of his peace. These awful developments followed the logic of Labor Zionism as night follows day. It has been a very, very long time since I have encountered a book that reiterates with such buoyancy the phrase, "It was no accident." I counted it four times on a single page.

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Sternhell makes an emphatic, and not inaccurate, case for Israel as a distinctly ideological enterprise. Zionism drew, often uneasily, on the interplay between piety and secularism, socialism and pragmatism, idealism and *realpolitik*, dreams of liberation and more than occasional, if intermittent, brutality. And its founders emphasized, as Sternhell correctly observes, mostly the mass migration of the Jewish people from Europe, and elsewhere, too. This was the goal that would make everything else possible. In the process, moreover, they turned a blind eye, or paid scant attention, to a great deal: the fate of European Jews under Nazism (not that they could have done much about it), the unhappiness of the Arabs under their rule, the vicissitudes of North African emigrants in the early 1950s.

And yet, within the span of less than half a century (from the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917), they somehow managed to respond to a great collective emergency and to create an independent state. If, as Sternhell assumes, it was no worse a place, already in the 1920s, than other capitalist societies—whatever that means—well, that too is no small accomplishment for a community with a negligible presence in the region a few decades earlier. Moreover, Sternhell is a historian of fascism. He knows that the twentieth century provided Jews not only with the prospect of integration and achievement, but also with a much less desirable role as the central objects of the fevered imaginations of anti-Semites and their murderous ideologies. Surely Zionism cannot be understood without appreciation of the impact of such horrors.

Sternhell moves, often uneasily, between affirmations of the validity of Jewish nationalism and suspicions of it as little more than a refuge for frightened souls and second-rate minds. Still, he insists on the importance of Zionism's central thesis: namely, the ingathering of the Jews for the sake of collective safety. This is implicit in his book, and it was made explicit in an article that Sternhell published in *Ha-Aretz* in November 1995, soon after the Rabin assassination. There he wrote that the goal of the Labor Zionists "to save Jews and to conquer the land" was "legitimate and imperative." But now there is this hostile, distorted book. The truth is that Labor Zionism, the chief influence on Israeli statebuilding, was not at all as ugly or as insular as Sternhell makes it appear to be.

Its leading theorists wrote extensively on the fullest range of subjects, political as well as cultural. And they drew on influences well beyond the curriculum of even the most expansive *heder*. A vivid illustration of what Sternhell excises from his account on this score is the absence from his index of any reference to populism. It was populism, not Marxism, that was the most compelling of all Russian influences on the shaping of Jewish Palestine; and from it Labor Zionists learned how to wrestle with, or at least to speak about, the interplay between the demands of the community and the individual, between collectivism and freedom, labor and high culture, nation and class. They were guided in these explorations by humane, dexterous, mostly socialist, non-Marxist writers, such as Lavrov, Mikhailovsky, and Kropotkin. Tolstoy, too, was a significant influence on them. These figures represented in the Yishuv the best face of Russia, an example of how to be true to one's own culture and responsive to the larger world. There is not a glimpse of this crucial side of the Russian experience in Sternhell's account.

Nor was Zionism, in its political affairs in Palestine, as homogeneous as Sternhell asserts. David Ben Gurion and Chaim Weizmann (who barely figures in Sternhell's account) were often ruthlessly pragmatic; but at the same time they were influenced (contrary to Sternhell) by distinct ideological principles that made them clash over precisely the issues that, according to Sternhell, were never in dispute. It is simply ridiculous to believe that there was no significant difference between the Zionist left and the Zionist right in Palestine. The battles between them were fierce, and sometimes spilled onto the streets. Were the fighters pretending, or were they falsely conscious? In fact, Labor Zionism and Revisionist Zionism bitterly disputed the role of labor and the role of capital, the influence of Britain and the influence of the United States (and, for that matter, of the Soviet Union), the place of religion, secularism, socialism, and democracy, Hebrew labor, class-based unions, and so on. And for most of the period depicted by Sternhell, the Jewish community of Palestine was under Mandate rule, and Jewish leaders had limited authority. Comparisons between them and the prime minister of France or the head of the Labor Party of Britain are very implausible.

Sternhell does make interesting observations regarding the choice of Labor Zionism under Ben Gurion to emphasize nation over class. This story, as it happens, has already been examined in great detail in Mitchell Cohen's important book, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel*. In Cohen's account, the reconfiguration of socialism by Ben Gurion in the first decades of the twentieth century was an act of pragmatism in a tenuous, fractious milieu. Cohen notes the shortcomings of this decision, as he sees it, but he also understands, with immeasurably more insight than Sternhell, the reasons for it. It was, briefly, the product of Ben Gurion's acute sense of Jewish Palestine's most pressing economic, political, cultural, and strategic needs. And whatever relationship there was between the pre-1948 settlement policies of Ben Gurion and the expansionism of post-1967 Israel, it was a relationship far more complicated, conflicted, and tragic than the bland teleological depiction provided by Sternhell.

It is a measure of this book's analytical and rhetorical excess that it seeks to tarnish Labor Zionism with nothing less than protofascism. Fascism has haunted Zionism, all right—but not quite as critics of Zionism like to think. For much of the immigration to the land of Israel was made up of Jews fleeing the xenophobia of interwar East Central Europe, which eventually erupted in outright fascism. In the 1930s, there was a massive influx of Jews from Nazi Germany, and immediately after the War the remnants made their way to Palestine with vivid, horrible recollections of the wages of fascism. Nationalist socialism, indeed.

The assertion that there was no difference between the party of David Ben Gurion and the party of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the ideological father of the current Likud government in Israel, was a standard feature in the criticisms leveled by extreme left-wing opponents of the Labor Zionists, before and after the establishment of the state. It was absurd. And the use of the term "fascist" often served as a surefire method of pushing someone beyond the realm of legitimate discourse. But Israeli politics is a long exercise in mass hyperbole, and eventually the use of the word "fascist" became little more than a part of the rich arsenal of ugly familial insults. This remained true despite the radicalization of religious politics after 1967, the election of Meir Kahane (who *was* a fascist, but also a marginal and much-excoriated figure) to the Knesset in the early 1980s, the discovery of a right-wing underground that planned to kill Arab officials and to bomb Islamic holy sites, the highly divisive war in Lebanon that pitted right against left, the murder of the activist Emil Grunzweig at a Peace Now rally, and Baruch Goldstein's massacre of Islamic worshippers in Hebron.

This lost innocence was the response, in late 1982 and early 1983, to Amos Oz's series of articles on conversations that he

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had throughout the country with right-wingers. They included a monologue by an Israeli who dubbed himself a "Judeo-Nazi." (Oz's reports were published in the Labor Party newspaper *Davar*, and were later collected in *In the Land of Israel*.) Oz's critics, who included several of Israel's prominent older writers, accused him of fabricating the transcript. The most controversial moment in the interview came when Oz asked the man, in a question he left hanging: "Is it possible that Hitler not only killed the Jews but also infected them with his poison? Did that same venom in fact seep into some hearts, and does it continue to seep out from there?" Oz was writing as if the mere supposition was almost too absurd to take seriously. He uttered the words in an uncharacteristically halting, tentative fashion.

Oz's book of the early '80s—the first to give real prominence to the threat posed by Israeli fascists (the real ones, who do not include the founders of the state)—concludes with an affectionate, loving, almost desperately self-congratulatory glimpse at Labor Zionism and its achievements. They are represented by the port town of Ashdod. It is there that Oz ends his journey, in a place as different from the West Bank settlements described elsewhere in the book—with their talk of apocalypse and civil war—as Seattle is from Waco. The writer sits serenely in the town square, and observes its small, mundane pleasures, and admires its handsome women, and chats with a few decent, progressive old men—and the left-leaning Oz feels reassured, after his long, terrible journey into the right-wing darkness, about what is at the heart of Israel:

> A small Mediterranean city is Ashdod, a pleasant city, unpretentious, with a port, and a lighthouse, and a power station and factories and many landscaped avenues. Not pretending to be Paris or Zurich or aspiring to be Jerusalem. A city planned by social democrats: without imperial boulevards, without monuments, without grandiose merchants' homes. A city living entirely in the present tense, a clean city, almost serene.... You will find no Light unto the Nations here, but also no ghetto or slum—only a small, bright port city rapidly growing and expanding to the south and east.

But then came the assassination of Rabin, and the mood of the Israeli left, along with much else in Israel, soured. The Hebrew edition of Sternhell's book was written before Rabin's killing, but this strange, morose monograph may itself be seen as a measure of the new volatility of Israeli political culture, and of the desperation of the Israeli left. Sternhell, like Oz, is a man of the left, but when he enters Ashdod, as it were, he finds storm troopers. His book goes far beyond historical revisionism. There is no complexity about his analysis (and there are no astonishing archival discoveries). Sternhell's depiction of a living hell under Ben Gurion is the result only of dogmatism run amok. This is not a work of history, it is a work of psychodrama, a fervent, maddening, obsessive portrait of love lost. One puts it down with the feeling that no one could be quite that bad.

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TRB *continued from page 6*

that the government would rely on a dwindling band of aging hard-core addicts for more and more of its revenue. Do we really want that?

Which brings me to the second problem in the current debate: The normal rules of cost-benefit analysis seem to have been completely suspended. Politicians of both parties have been talking about a gigantic reshuffling of money and power as if it could take place without harming anyone's legitimate interests. We are all going to eat a free lunch paid for by the evil cigarette manufacturers. Actually, it will be sponsored in part by the millions of middle-class Americans who own stock in the tobacco companies through mutual funds. But no one likes to talk about that.

The reductio ad absurdum came on April 9, when the president visited Kentucky to promise small tobacco farmers and warehouse operators "clear and certain protection" for their livelihood and communities. He even went so far as to promise preservation of the $48 million federal tobacco price-support program, without which family tobacco farmers would have long since gone out of business. The event quickly devolved into a farce, with the farmers telling the president that they opposed teen smoking just as much as he did—and with both sides pretending fully to believe what the other was saying.

By this time, RJR had already withdrawn its support from the tobacco settlement legislation being drawn up by Senator John McCain of Arizona. Swayed by the most strident anti-tobacco forces, McCain myopically raised the price of a deal to Big Tobacco from $368 billion over 25 years to $516 billion over 25 years and, more importantly, eliminated any serious liability protection for the companies.

Now the tobacco industry says no deal. The conventional wisdom in Washington is that this is just a bluff. I'm not so sure. Big Tobacco started bargaining with the states and, later, the federal government, because a deal might be cheaper than the cost of fighting massive class action lawsuits. Maybe now the industry will simply take its chances in the courts. For one of the paradoxes of the tobacco issue is that Big Tobacco has almost never lost a product-liability case. When pollsters ask about the damage done by smoking, Americans say: "Make the tobacco industry pay." But, when they sit on juries, members of the public have almost always found the cancer-suffering plaintiffs at least partly to blame for their own predicament—and have thus refused to impose damages on the cigarette makers. It seems that, when Americans consider the plight of smokers in the abstract, they feel their pain, but, when they actually meet a smoker in court, the question becomes: "You're a grown-up. Why didn't you just say no?" Both perceptions are valid to some degree, which is why neither alone is a sufficient basis for public policy.

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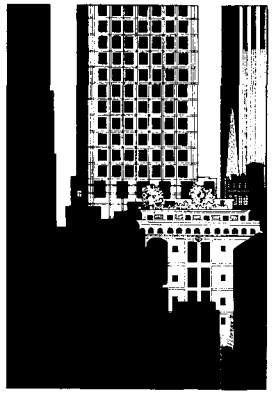
NEW YORK DIARIST

Cooked book

ERNST ZÜNDEL, THE DEAN OF Canadian Holocaust deniers, is touting a new book on his Web page, "The Zündelsite." The book is *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, and you can find it on the spring list of the literary imprint of Henry Holt & Company. It is by no means the first critique of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's 1996 best-seller, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, which argued Germans willingly killed Jews because of a culturally rooted eliminationist anti-Semitism. TNR itself has published a fierce rebuttal by the Israeli historian Omer Bartov. (See "Ordinary Monsters," April 29, 1996.) So to question Goldhagen is not to deny the Holocaust. But *A Nation on Trial* is different: The author of one of its two component essays, Norman Finkelstein, is a notorious anti-Zionist for whom the book marks a new phase in a personal campaign against Israel. In *A Nation on Trial*, Finkelstein brands "the Holocaust studies industry" a Zionist instrument. In other writings, Finkelstein equates the Nazi genocide to racial discrimination in the American South and remarks: "I can't imagine why Israel's apologists would be offended by a comparison with the Gestapo. I would think that, for them, it is like Lee Iacocca being told that Chrysler is using Toyota tactics." Small wonder, then, that the Zündelsite hails *A Nation on Trial* as a "most courageous book" that "strongly rebuts that blatantly talmudic smear called *Hitler's Willing Executioners*...."

THE BOOK'S OTHER CONTRIBUtor, Ruth Bettina Birn, is no marginal academic; she's the chief historian of the War Crimes section of Canada's Department of Justice. In other words, she is employed by Canadian taxpayers to provide the historical proof needed to prosecute and officially deport the inordinate number of Nazi war criminals living in that country. Several former Canadian Justice Department officials and a number of local Jewish leaders are concerned that Birn's willingness to link herself to Finkelstein will damage the War Crimes unit, which, since its creation in 1987, has managed to deport one alleged war criminal. The United States has thrown out more than 50.

THESE ARE, TO BE SURE, LEAN times for nonfiction publishers. But, in trying to exploit the controversy attending that rarest of publishing phenomena—a nonfiction blockbuster—Holt has lent its cachet to the work of a pseudoscholarly ideologue. It all began about a year ago, when Finkelstein started peddling his essay, "Daniel Goldhagen's 'Crazy' Thesis." A clue to the nature of his scholarship was right there on the cover sheet of the 50-page screed, where Finkelstein thanked Noam Chomsky. Finkelstein struck out in the U.S. But *The New Left Review* published the essay in London last July. Soon, the piece was making waves in Germany, where the appetite for anything to do with Goldhagen seems insatiable. Last fall, word spread that Holt was planning to bring out Finkelstein's essay alongside one that Birn had penned for *The Historical Journal*, a publication of Cambridge University Press. Both the Anti-Defamation League and the World Jewish Congress expressed concern to Holt (as did TNR's own literary editor, Leon Wieseltier); they pointed out that, in addition to his political bias, Finkelstein has no scholarly expertise on the Holocaust and that his ignorance of German precludes his reading the sources he accuses Goldhagen of misusing.



HOLT SENSED THE FORCES OF censorship. But of course this is a canard—there is a difference between censorship and upholding standards. In fact, when I first reported on the controversy surrounding the publication of this book last fall, the president of Holt, Michael Naumann, seemed quite sensitive to the question of Finkelstein's anti-Zionism and quite willing to alter the content of the book accordingly. He even implied to me that the anti-Israel passages would be excised from the essay. "This book in no way approaches issues of Zionism, anti-Zionism, or any other issues concerning the creation of the state of Israel," Naumann told me. Nevertheless, in *A Nation on Trial*, Finkelstein claims that Holocaust studies grew out of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war as part of an effort to silence critics of Israel. Finkelstein argues that this is the crucial political context for understanding Goldhagen. "'The Holocaust' is in effect the Zionist account of the Nazi holocaust," he writes, "and it acquired special status after the June 1967 war because it was politically expedient." To this "scholar," the natural effort by Jews to understand the greatest cataclysm in their history becomes a Zionist plot.

IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH THE London newspaper *The Observer*, Finkelstein remarked that "every circus needs a clown, and in Goldhagen the Holocaust circus has found one." If the effort to understand the Holocaust is a circus to Finkelstein, it's little more than a giant United Jewish Appeal fundraiser to Birn—at least when she is addressing a German audience. In a November interview with *Der Spiegel*, she said Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was meant to serve as a "devotional picture" for "rich financial contributors." Birn has also said that there had been a campaign to promote Goldhagen's book and that there was now an effort afoot to stifle her critique.

BUT BIRN, TOO, STUMbles when she tries to take the moral high ground. No one objected to her right to publish; her views on Goldhagen had already appeared in the aforementioned scholarly journal and in *The Ottawa Citizen*. Protests were only lodged when she agreed to coauthor a book with Finkelstein. Perhaps most perplexing of all is the fact that several respected Holocaust scholars provided blurbs for *A Nation on Trial*. It's no secret that Goldhagen's sudden fame and his audacious challenge to the existing body of Holocaust literature rubbed many of his elder colleagues the wrong way. And, indeed, given Goldhagen's irreverence, their reactions were not entirely unprovoked. But it was nevertheless surprising to see reputable historians like Raul Hilberg and Christopher Browning publicly embrace *A Nation on Trial*. Browning's blurb—"I do not embrace every aspect of Finkelstein's conclusions concerning the politicization of Holocaust historiography...."—was hedged. For his part, Hilberg told me that *A Nation on Trial* is a corrective for *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, which he believes should never have been published. "The memory of the Holocaust deserves better," he says. *That* should have been his blurb for *A Nation on Trial*.

JONATHAN MAHLER

JONATHAN MAHLER is editorial page editor of the *Forward*.

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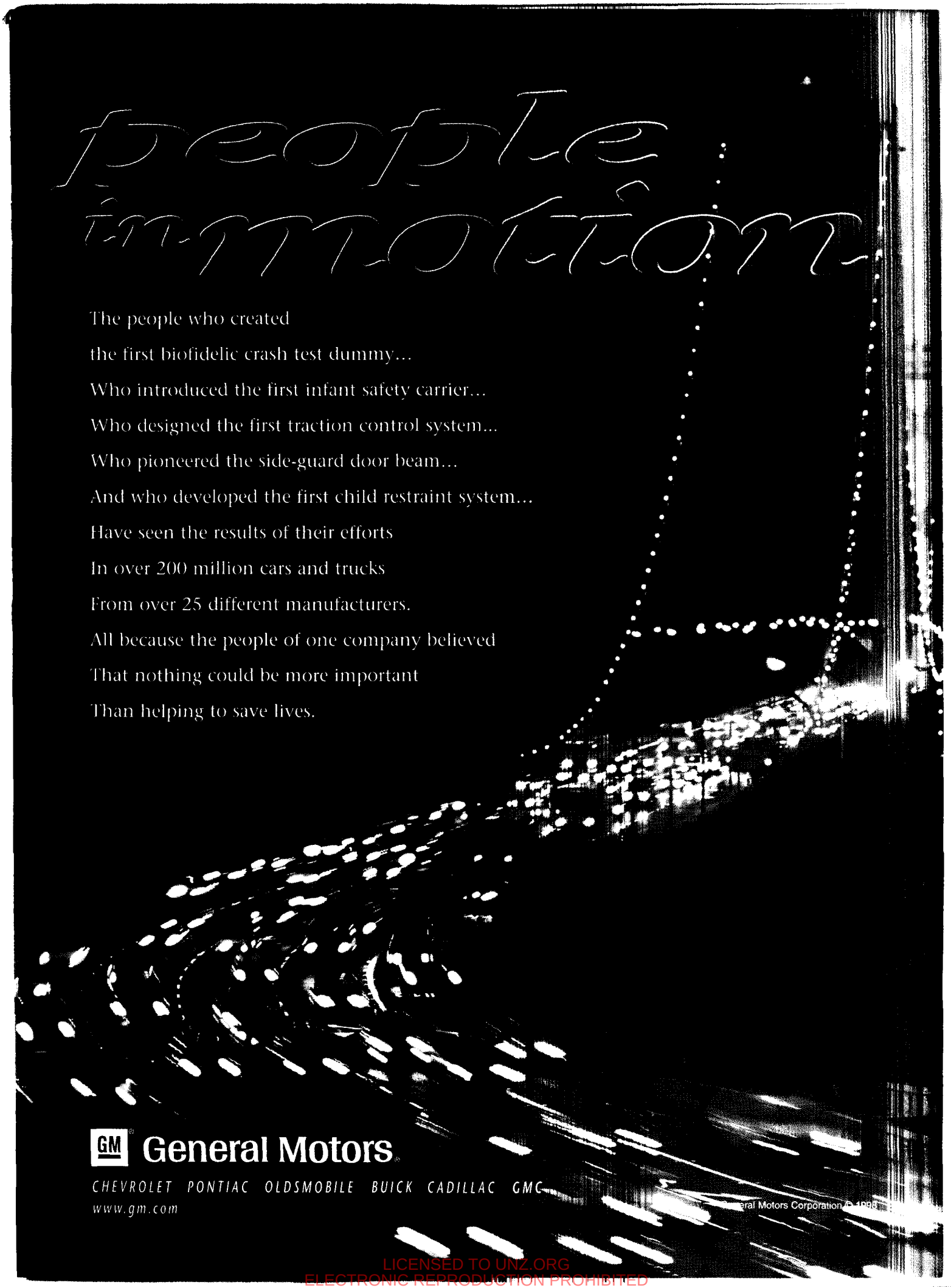
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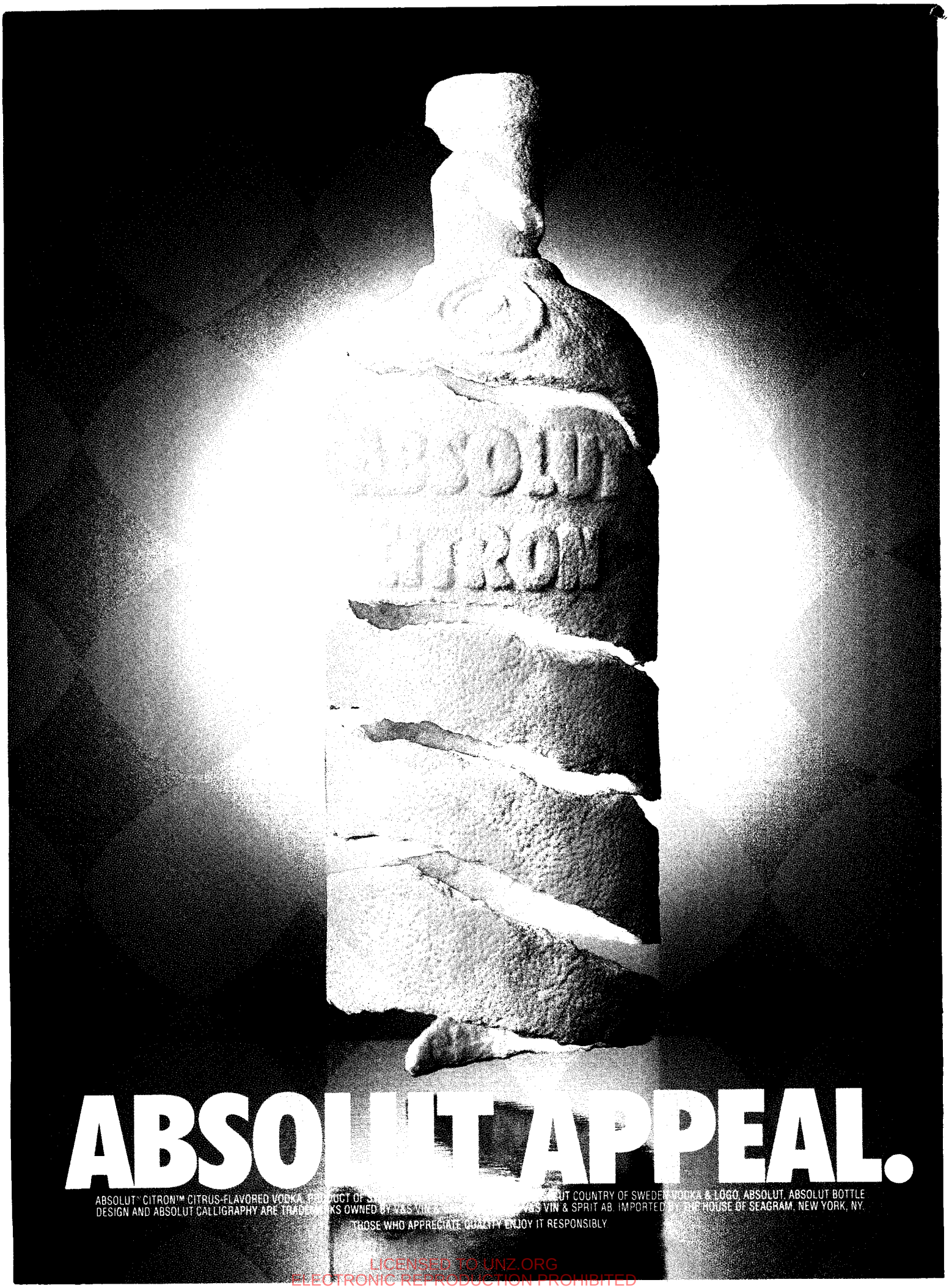

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